

THE ARGOSY.

MARCH, 1887.

LADY GRACE.

BY MRS. HENRY WOOD, AUTHOR OF "EAST LYNNE."

CHAPTER V.

THE LADS.

IT was a long, red brick house, large and handsome, as many of these country Rectories are ; and on the spacious front lawn, one glorious morning at the end of June, might be seen the Reverend Ryle Baumgarten, his wife and children. Lady Grace sat on a bench under the shade of the lime trees ; the Rector stood by, talking with her. Two little boys were running about chasing a yellow butterfly. They were dressed alike, after the fashion of the day, in brown holland blouses, white frilled drawers which came just below the knee, white socks, shoes, and broad-brimmed straw hats.

" You keep still, Charley," cried the elder one, a bold, beautiful child of five years ; " you only frighten him dodging in his way like that."

" Me want to tatch him, Cy'as," said the little one, who was just turned three, and did not speak plainly ; " me a'most dot him."

" I'm going to catch him for you," said the other, imperiously. " You go back to mamma."

" Let him stay where he is ; he can run after the butterfly if he chooses, as well as you, Master Cyrus," interposed a nursemaid who was walking about, carrying a baby in white.

" It's nothing to you, Jaquet—you hold your tongue," retorted Cyrus, for between him and Jaquet there was no love lost, especially Jaquet, as the Americans say.

A clever movement of his hat captured the unfortunate butterfly. " I've got him, Charley !" shouted Cyrus in triumph, and the boys sat down together on the grass.

They were wonderfully alike these two little half-brothers, each possessing his father's face in miniature ; the same pale, healthy complexion, the fine, clear-cut features, the dark eyes so deeply set within their long lashes, and the wavy brown hair soft as silk. But in dispo-

sition they were quite different. Cyras was bold, self-willed, masterful; Charles gentle, pliant and timid. Cyras was tall and strong, and forward beyond his years; the younger one was yielding, childish and backward. Already Cyras constituted himself his brother's protector, and Charles in his hands was as a tender reed. The affection between them was great, rather unusually so.

When Lady Grace married, she had brought Jaquet with her, one of the housemaids from Avon House, to be upper housemaid at the Rectory and to wait upon herself. Dinah also came to it in charge of little Cyras. Just as Lady Grace's first child, Charles, was born, old Dinah was seized with permanent illness, and Jaquet became nurse to both children. Jaquet was good and faithful on the whole, but she had her tempers and her prejudices. She learned to love the infant with ardour, but she learned to dislike Cyras. This arose partly from the fact that she had not herself nursed him from the first, and partly because Cyras, even when very little, would set her at defiance in refusing to give in to her whims.

Some people had prophesied that Lady Grace would repent her imprudent marriage. They proved to be wrong. Grace was intensely happy in it. To live quietly at a secluded country Rectory upon fourteen hundred a year was very different from the pomp which she had enjoyed as an earl's daughter, but Grace seemed to have found her vocation in this unpretending life. Grace had brought with her only five hundred a year to augment Mr. Baumgarten's means; it was all she would enjoy until Lady Avon's death. She made a fairly kind stepmother to the little Cyras, but she had not the same affection for him as for Charles. That goes, as the French say, without telling. Her baby, now in Jaquet's arms, was a fair girl, the little Gertrude.

"Well, Grace, what am I to say?" asked Mr. Baumgarten.

Lady Grace did not answer at once; she appeared to be considering. It was some question of a visit they were discussing.

"Ryle," she said, raising her beautiful face to look at him, "I would rather not go. I do not like that man."

"So be it," he answered; "I would rather stay at home myself. But why don't you like him, Grace? Most people find him charming."

"I can't tell why. I don't, and that's all I am able to say about it."

"A case of Dr. Fell," returned the rector with semi-gravity; and Lady Grace laughed.

"Yes, that's it, I suppose. My private opinion is that his own wife does not like him."

"I say, Grace, don't talk treason. The birds in the trees up there might carry it to the parish crier."

"I'll tell you one thing I saw, Ryle, the last time we were there: I've never mentioned it even to you," she resumed, lowering her voice in deference to the subject or to the birds of the air. "It was the evening before we came away. After I dressed for dinner I went

to her room door and knocked, calling out to ask whether she was ready to go down. She opened it herself very quickly ; her face looked confused, and there was a red mark on the left cheek, as if she had just had a blow, and tears were in her eyes. She only drew the door open an inch or two, but I saw ——”

Lady Grace broke off at the sound of wheels and did not finish her story. The large, low, open carriage, which the reader has seen before, driven by its liveried postilion, was stopping at the gate. Mr. Baumgarten hastened to assist Lady Avon from it, and give her his arm.

She walked slowly to the bench where her daughter was sitting. She was just the same invalid as ever, had been so all these years ; but she did not seem to grow much worse. The boys ran up to her.

“ Me dot a butterfly, grandma,” said the little one, exhibiting his treasure. “ Cy’as dot it for me.”

“ Grandmamma, it is my birthday,” said Cyras, who had been allowed so to call the Countess. “ Papa gave me a new book with pictures, and mamma gave me a box of sweets. Shall you give me anything ? ”

“ I must consider what I have to give,” said Lady Avon smiling, as she kissed them both. “ Let me see, is it five years old you are to-day, Cyras ? ”

“ Yes, I’m five,” answered the young man. “ I shall be a great big boy next year ; big enough to go to school, Jaquet says.”

Jaquet, who had drawn near with the baby, knitted her brows and made all the dumb signs to the boy she dare make, as an injunction to hold his tongue ; her lady was not one to permit gratuitous suggestions. The Countess held out her arms for the baby.

“ The boys are like their father, Grace,” she observed, looking down at the infant ; “ but Gertrude is like you.”

“ Yes,” assented Grace, with a laugh. “ Well, mamma, that is just as it should be, isn’t it ? ”

“ I suppose it is, my dear. Which of you little boys will go for a drive with me ? It must be you, Cyras, I think, as it is your birthday.”

“ Oh, yes, yes ! ” cried the boy eagerly ; “ I will go. Jaquet, fetch my best hat.”

“ Me, too,” added little Charley.

“ No, I cannot manage both of you,” said Lady Avon. “ You shall go another day, Charley ; perhaps to-morrow.”

“ My hat, Jaquet ! ” again said Cyras impatiently, for the girl had not stirred. Lady Grace looked at her.

“ Do you hear,” she said, in her haughty way. “ Master Cyras told you to fetch his hat. Bring his little cape as well.”

Now this was just what Jaquet hated. For Cyras to order her about imperiously, and for her lady to confirm it.

“ Ryle,” said Lady Avon to her son-in-law, when Jaquet had gone for the things, “ can you not do something or other to put down that Fair ? ”

She spoke of a pleasure fair which was held every midsummer on Whitton Common, and lasted for a week.

The Rector shook his head in answer. "Why, no ; how could I, Lady Avon ?"

"You have great influence in the parish. Everyone looks up to you."

"But I have none over the Fair. No one has. It possesses 'vested interests,' you know," added Mr. Baumgarten laughing, "and they are too strong to be interfered with. I try to induce my people to keep away from it ; that is all I can do."

"It is a very annoying thing," said Lady Avon. "Every year that Midsummer Fair sets itself up amidst us for a whole week, and works no end of ill in demoralizing people. Robert went off to it last night, and got home, Charity tells me, at one o'clock this morning, not sober. I spoke to him just now, asking him if he did not feel ashamed of himself, and he had the face to tell me he was perfectly sober, but that the merry-go-round, which he unfortunately went into, turned his head giddy."

The Rector bit his lips. Lady Grace burst into a laugh. "Mamma," she said, "do you remember how I used to like to go to that Fair on the children's day, as it is called, when we first came down here? They had a theatre on the ground one year, and I made Mademoiselle take me in to see the performance ; and there was always an elephant in another show, and oceans of delicious cakes and gingerbread nuts."

"I'm going to the Fair to-morrow," put in Cyras.

"Me too," said Charley.

"Certainly not," austere spoke Lady Avon. "Ryle, you surely will not so far countenance the thing as to allow your children to go!"

"Well, I—hardly know," replied Mr. Baumgarten with hesitation. "All the children in the parish will be there to-morrow."

"But not yours. It would be a direct encouragement of evil for the children of the Rector to be seen there. You and Grace know I never interfere with your management, but I really must do so in this one matter. The boys must not go to the Fair."

"Don't put yourself out, mother," said Lady Grace equably ; "they shall not go as you make a point of it."

"I want to go, mamma," cried Cyras sturdily. "Me and Charley are to go."

"Be quiet, Cyras. You hear what grandmamma says. The Fair is a naughty place, not good for little boys."

"The Fair is not a naughty place," disputed Cyras, looking his step-mother undauntedly in the face while maintaining his opinion. "There's swings there, and drums and whistles."

"I will have some drums and whistles bought for you, my dear, and bring them here, and some for Charley," said Lady Avon. "And here comes your hat, Cyras ; and we must be going, or we shall have time for only a short drive."

Jacquet put on the child's hat and cape. Grace took the baby from her mother, and Mr. Baumgarten escorted Lady Avon to the carriage.

"Be a good boy, Cyras; don't be troublesome to your grandmamma," enjoined the Rector, as he placed the lad beside Lady Avon.

Cyras could be very good indeed when he pleased, quite an intelligent little companion, and he always was so when with Lady Avon. Without being in the least harsh in her manner to children, but ever kind and firm, Lady Avon was one of those women who seem to obtain obedience without palpably exacting it. The only child she had ever been too indulgent to, and *not* firm with, was her daughter Grace. Cyras talked to his grandmamma as they went along, sometimes standing up—when Lady Avon held him fast by his blouse—to talk to the postilion about the pretty horses and the harness, and what not. Cyras was always sociable.

"Where are we going, grandmamma?" asked he, as they turned into a green lane, which led to a cross country road in the opposite direction to the Fair, near which Lady Avon would not have gone had she been bribed to do so. "It is very pretty this way; perhaps we shall see some haymakers."

Cyras was quite satisfied; all roads were pretty much alike to him. They saw some haymakers, and they saw some gipsies.

In returning home, when driving across a strip of waste land or common, an open carriage containing an old lady encountered that of Lady Avon. Both carriages stopped abreast, and the ladies entered into conversation. It chanced that they had stopped exactly opposite a gipsy encampment, the sight of which gave Cyras unbounded delight. He had never seen one before; or, if he had, had forgotten it.

The fires on the short grass; the kettles swung above them; the tent behind; the children running about, and the dark, sunburnt women who looked up with smiling faces, had a wonderful attraction for Cyras. He wished he might get out and run to them; but just as he was wishing it the carriages parted to move on.

"Grandmamma, look. Do look. Isn't it nice?"

Lady Avon turned to Cyras's side of the carriage and saw the settlement; she had not before observed it. "Dear me," said she, "a gipsy encampment! I wonder they are not at the Fair. The men are, I suppose; I see none about."

"What is it, grandmamma?"

"A gipsy camp, my dear. They are people who rove about the country, and sleep in the open air at night, or in caravans."

"I wish I could. Do you see the fires, grandmamma? Couldn't we go to them?"

"Oh, dear, no," said Lady Avon, very decisively. "Little boys must never go near such people."

The carriage deposited Cyras at the Rectory gate as the clocks were

striking one. Lady Avon watched him inside, and then drove on. Charley came running out of doors to meet his brother.

"Oh, Charley, I wish you'd been with us!" began Cyras. "We've seen something beautiful."

"What is it?" asked Charles. "Jam?"

"It was gipsies. They'd got fires all blazing on the ground—on the grass, you know; and there was a big round thing you couldn't see inside of. I think there was a rocking-horse in it," added Cyras, thoughtfully.

"Take me to see it, Cy'as! Please take me! Jaquet —"

The child's words were cut short by Jaquet herself, who came to hasten them in to their dinner.

The little boys dined at the luncheon table. That day it happened that a clergyman from a distance was present at the meal. He and Mr. Baumgarten went into very deep converse about some public church matters which were not giving satisfaction. Lady Grace joined in it; thus Cyras found no opportunity to tell of his experiences touching the gipsy camp, as he would otherwise have done. The children were trained on the good old-fashioned plan—not to interrupt the conversation of their seniors, or to speak at all if strangers were present, unless spoken to. It would be well if the same training held sway at the present day.

Luncheon over, Mr. Baumgarten went out at once with his friend. Lady Grace proceeded to the nursery, and the boys ran to their swing—a perfectly safe one—at the back of the house.

About three o'clock Lady Alwyn and her sister drove up. They came from a distance, and generally stayed an hour or two with Lady Grace, with whom they were intimate, the carriage being put up for the time. The days of afternoon tea had not then come in; people would as soon have thought of offering broth as tea before dinner; but wine and cake, the usual refreshment, were rung for by Lady Grace, which the man-servant, Moore, took in.

About four o'clock, Jaquet went to see after the boys. Her mistress had said they had gone to the swing. Jaquet could not see them anywhere and ran round to the front lawn. They were not there.

"Do you know where the children are, Moore?" she enquired, meeting the man in the hall.

"No, unless they're with my lady in the drawing-room; they were there when I took in the wine and cake," answered Moore. He was a son of the clerk at Great Whitton church, and had lived with Mr. Baumgarten and Lady Grace since they first came to the Rectory, the only indoor manservant.

"Oh, then they are sure to be there: trust them for stopping where there's any cake going on," said Jaquet. And she went back to her nursery and to the baby, then just waking up out of sleep.

It was five o'clock when the carriage was brought round and the

guests went away. Lady Grace ran up to the nursery. A maid was carrying in the tray containing the children's tea and Jaquet's.

"Where are they?" asked Lady Grace, looking round.

"Where's who, my lady?" returned the nurse.

"The children."

"They have not been up here," said Jaquet. "I thought they were with your ladyship."

"They must be at the swing," said Lady Grace.

But the children were not at the swing; they were not in the front garden; they did not seem to be anywhere. Lady Grace began to feel somewhat uneasy. She went outside the gate and looked down the avenue which led to the high road; still she did not think they would run off of their own accord; even Cyras had never done that.

Moore, Jaquet, and one of the housemaids went about, searching the house and grounds thoroughly; all in vain. In the midst of the commotion Mr. Baumgarten came home.

"Why, what's the matter?" he exclaimed, seeing the assembled searchers at the gate with excited faces.

"The children are lost," said Lady Grace.

"Lost! The children! Oh, nonsense," said Mr. Baumgarten.

It appeared that the last seen of them was when Moore took the wine and cake to the drawing-room. Lady Grace was not very clear as to how soon afterwards they left it; she thought immediately; but she was quite sure they came into it only a minute or two before Moore. They did not have any cake; did not wait until it was cut.

"What time was it?" asked Mr. Baumgarten.

It wanted about a quarter to four, Moore thought, when he took the tray in.

At this moment, a youth, who had been taken on that week to assist the gardener in bedding out some plants, approached from the side of the lawn, touching his cap to the Rector, and looking as if he wanted to speak.

"What is it, James?"

"I beg pardon, sir; I saw the two little gentlemen go through the gate this afternoon. It was a little afore four o'clock. They ran as fast as they could down the avenue, their little legs did, as if afraid of being overtaken. Master Cyras held the little one by the hand."

"Why did you not stop them?" demanded the Rector—which caused James to open wide his eyes.

"Me, sir! I shouldn't made bold to stop 'em, sir, without being telled to."

"They have gone off to the Fair," said Mr. Baumgarten to his wife. "I suppose this comes of our having promised your mother in their hearing that they should not go to it."

"Then it's Cyras who is in fault," said she. "Charles would not have the sense to do such a thing, or the courage either."

"Of course not. He is too young for that yet awhile."

"Will they come to harm, think you, Ryle?"

"Young monkeys!" he cried, half laughing, as he walked away with a quick step in pursuit. "Harm, no; don't worry yourself, Grace; I'll soon catch them up."

The Fair was held on Whitton Common, on the other side of the village, and near to Little Whitton. There was also a way to it through fields and shady lanes, and Lady Grace bethought herself to despatch Moore by that route, though it was hardly likely the children had taken it.

In any kind of suspense time seems to move on leaden wings. When an hour had elapsed and did not bring the truants, Lady Grace grew very uneasy. In her restlessness, she put on her bonnet and went down the avenue to where the high road crossed it, and stood there looking out. All the stragglers, passing by, were going towards the Fair; none coming from it. Not one.

"Of course not!" she impatiently cried. "It is just the time when the workpeople are flocking to it," and she turned back home. This little excursion she repeated twice or thrice.

About half-past six, standing again in the road, she saw Mr. Baumgarten hastening back. But he was not leading a child in each hand, as she had fondly pictured; he was alone.

"I cannot see or hear anything of them," he said, in answer to his wife's impulsive question. "I don't think they can have gone to the Fair."

"But where else would they be likely to go, Ryle?"

"Boyd has been sitting in his garden all the afternoon, in full aim of the road; had his tea brought out to him there," continued Mr. Baumgarten, alluding to his curate, who had been disabled the past week or two, through an accident to his foot. "He says he could not have failed to see the little ones had they appeared; and he has been watching the passers-by to the Fair by way of amusement."

"Did you go on to the Fair, Ryle, and look about in it? Did you enquire of the people?"

"Why, of course I did, Grace. I searched all over it, in the booths and out of them. Only a sprinkling of people had collected; it was too early. I inquired of nearly everyone, I think, describing the boys; but they had not been seen."

Just within the avenue leading to the house there stood a bench, placed there by Mr. Chester, the late Rector, for the accommodation of wayfarers. Mr. Baumgarten, who was hot and tired, sat down on it.

"You had better come in and have some dinner, Ryle."

"Not now; I must be off again."

"But where can you go now?" she asked, taking a seat beside him.

"I don't know where; somewhere or other. I can't rest in this uncertainty."

"Did you see Moore? I sent him after you, the field way."

"I saw him on the common. He had not come across the young ones."

Two or three minutes longer they sat. Mr. Baumgarten was utterly fatigued and quite at a loss to decide which way would be the best, next to start upon. Grace shivered inwardly, picturing the harm which would come, or had come, to Charley.

"Do you think they have been kidnapped, Ryle? Both are beautiful boys."

"No, no," said Mr. Baumgarten.

By degrees they became aware that sundry people were speeding along the highway one after another, not towards the Fair, but in the other direction. "Where can they be going?" cried Grace.—"Has anything happened?" she inquired, running to arrest one of them—a working man from a cottage hard by.

"It's reported there has just been a great landslip in that cutting they were making for the railway, my lady, and some people are buried under it," answered the man. "One boy's killed."

Lady Grace cried out in terror. "Oh Ryle, Ryle, do you hear?" she moaned. "That's where the children are gone. The other day, when I had them out with me, I could hardly get them past it. They wanted to go down into the cutting."

Mr. Baumgarten turned very pale. "Hush, my dear!" he said in a low, tender tone, "we must hope for the best. I will—here comes Brice!"

"Yes, I'm afraid it is a serious accident," began the doctor, in answer to their emotional faces. A fellow has just run over to tell me. What do you say?—What?—The children there! Bless my heart!"

"Go indoors, my love; keep yourself as tranquil as you can while I go on with Brice," whispered Mr. Baumgarten to his agitated wife.

Indoors! In that suspense? No; Lady Grace could not be tranquil enough for that. She paced about the avenue, and sat down on the bench, and stood in the highway watching the runners speeding to the scene; all by fits and starts. Twilight was coming on when she saw her husband returning. Mr. Brice was with him.

The landslip had not been so bad as reported. Landslips and other mishaps rarely are. Two men only were injured, and the boy spoken of; none of them mortally, and Mr. Brice had attended to them. No trace had been found there of the children.

"I'm sure I don't know where to look now," said Mr. Baumgarten, his voice betraying his weariness. "Grace, I believe I must snatch some refreshment before I go out again."

She put her arm within his at once and led him down the avenue. "Are you coming, too, Mr. Brice?" she said, holding out her hand. "That's right. I'm sure you must need something."

Tea was brought in, and some hastily-cut sandwiches. In ten minutes they were out of doors again.

"They are at the Fair, those young rebels, rely upon that," spoke Mr. Brice, purposely making light of the matter. "You must have missed them, Baumgarten."

"I think so, too," added Lady Grace. "I think you should go there again, Ryle."

Just as she was speaking, and they were walking slowly down the path, the gate opened and a group came in. A tall man, with flashing black eyes and a yellow skin, evidently a gipsy, and—the two boys. He was carrying Charley in his arms; Cyrus trotted beside him.

"Mamma, mamma!" cried Charley. And Grace Baumgarten wondered whether she had ever before given such heartfelt thanks to God.

Instead of advancing to meet the children and the man, Mr. Baumgarten suddenly sat down on a garden seat. The same curious sickness, or pain, or oppression—he hardly knew what it was—which had attacked him once or twice before, seized him now. Mr. Brice and Lady Grace were asking questions.

"Yes, master," said the man, addressing Mr. Brice, "when we got back to the women and children this evening these two little gents was there with 'em round the fire; so I set off again and brought 'em home."

"How could you be so naughty, Cyrus, as to run away?" cried Lady Grace.

"I wanted to show Charley the gipsy camp," replied Cyrus.

"Were you not afraid, Charley, to go all that way," she continued.

"Me not afraid with Cy'as," said the little one.

"I took care of Charley," put in Cyrus, as if he had been a giant of strength.

Looking white and ill, Mr. Baumgarten came forward. The paroxysm had passed. He spoke a few heartfelt thanks to the man and rewarded him, and took him indoors that something to eat and drink might be given to him.

"I shall never speak against gipsies again," impulsively declared Lady Grace Baumgarten.

CHAPTER VI.

IN THE CATHEDRAL.

THE shades of twilight were fast gathering on the aisles of the old Cathedral, and the congregation, assembled in the choir for afternoon service, began to wonder whether the chanter would be able to finish without a light. The beautiful colours of the painted east window were growing dim—exceedingly beautiful were they when the sun illuminated them.

It was a full congregation, unusually numerous for a winter's afternoon, and one that threatened rain. The Bishop of Denham occupied his throne ; the Dean, a younger man and very handsome, sat in his stall. By his side was a boy of ten, or rather more ; he possessed the Dean's own face in miniature, and there could be no mistaking that they were father and son. Underneath the Dean was the pew of his wife, and with her was another boy, somewhat younger, but bearing a great resemblance to the one by the Dean. She was a fair, beautiful woman, with stately manners and a haughty face ; in age she may have been a year above thirty, though she did not look it.

Lord Avon, through influential friends, had taken care of his brother-in-law's preferment, and Ryle Baumgarten had been made Dean of Denham, and had taken his doctor's degree. He still retained the living of Great Whitton, as he was able to do, and he and Lady Grace spent part of the year at it. This afternoon he is presiding in his cathedral, and his wife, as already observed, sits beneath him. Cyrus sits with the Dean, Charles with his mother. Now they are all rising for the anthem.

The anthem was a short one this afternoon ; it was soon over, and the congregation knelt again. Meanwhile the atmosphere had grown darker.

The chanter, an elderly man with a round face and bald head, bent his spectacles nearer and nearer to his book, and the Dean, quietly pushing back the curtain beside his own stall, leaned down, whispered a word to one of the bedesmen who were congregated on the steps inside the choir entrance. The old man shuffled out, and presently shuffled in again with a flaring tallow candle, which he carried to the chanter's desk. The chanter gave him a nod for the unexpected accommodation, and went on more glibly. He had seen a light taken to the organ-loft before the commencement of the anthem.

The service concluded, the Bishop gave the blessing, and the congregation left the choir, but they did not leave the edifice : they waited in the body of the Cathedral to listen to the music, for the organist was treating them to some of the choicest morceaux amongst his voluntaries. He was an eminent player, and now and then chose to show them that he was so, and would keep them, delighted listeners, full half an hour after the conclusion of afternoon service : and sometimes he had to do so by order of the Dean.

The Bishop had little ear for music, but liked stopping in the Cathedral, and the social chat it afforded, very well. He slowly paced the flag-stones by the side of the dean's wife, the respectful crowd allowing them a wide berth ; Dr. Baumgarten stood close to the railings of a fine monument, partly listening, partly talking to the Sub-Dean. It was the month of November, the audit season, therefore all the great dignitaries of the Cathedral were gathered in Denham.

"What's that now, Lady Grace?" asked the Bishop. "It's something like Luther's Hymn: variations on it, possibly."

Lady Grace Baumgarten coughed down a laugh: but she knew the Bishop's musical deficiencies. "It is from a symphony of Mozart's: your lordship does not listen."

"Mozart, eh. I can distinguish a tune well enough when they sing the words to it, and I know our familiar airs, 'God save the Queen,' and the 'Blue Bells of Scotland,' and such like, but when it comes to these grand intricate pieces, I am all at sea," spoke the Bishop, in his honest simple-mindedness. "How are the children, Lady Grace?"

"Quite well, thank you. The two boys are here. I don't see them just now, but they are somewhere about."

Lady Grace could not see them, and for a very good reason—that they were not there. The elder, an indulged boy and wilful, had scampered out to the cloisters, the moment he could steal away from the paternal surplice, drawing his brother with him.

"Charley," quoth he, "it's come on to pour cats and dogs, and I promised Dynevor to go out with him after college. You go in, and bring me my top coat."

"Oh, Cyras, don't send me! Let me stop and listen to the organ."

"You stupid little monkey! Come, be off; or else you know what you'll get."

"But the music will be over, Cy," pleaded Charles, who was little and yielding and timid still, and completely under the dominion of masterful Cyras.

"The music be bothered! Here, take my Prayer-book in with you. Such nonsense as it is of mamma, to make us bring our Prayer-books to college when there are the large books in the stalls, ready for use! Look you, Mr. Charles, I'll allow you three minutes to get back here with the coat, and if you exceed it by half a second, you'll catch a tanning."

Master Baumgarten took out his watch—an appendage of which he was excessively proud—as he spoke; and Charley, knowing there was no appeal against his imperious brother, laid hold of the Prayer-book, and flew off through the covered passages which led into the Deanery from the cloisters.

Cyras amused himself with hissing and spitting at an unhappy cat, which had by some mischance got into the enclosed cloister graveyard; and, just before the time was up, back came the child, all breathless, the coat over his arm.

Cyras snatched it from him, thrust an arm into one of its sleeves, and was attempting to thrust the other, when he discovered that it did not belong to him. Charley had by mistake brought his own, and Cyras could not, by any dint of pushing, get into it. His temper rose; he struck the child a smart tap on the cheek, and then began

to buffet him with the unlucky coat. But he took care not to hurt him. It was all show.

"You careless little beggar! What the bother did you bring yours for? Haven't you got eyes? Haven't you got sense? Now, if——"

"Halloo! what's up? What's he been at now, Cy?"

The speaker was Frank Dynevor, Cyras Baumgarten's especial chum when he was at Denham. He was considerably older than Cyras, but the latter was a forward boy of his years, and would not acknowledge a companion in one of his own age.

"I sent him in for my coat, and he must bring his," explained Cyras. "A tanning would do him good."

"Of course it would," said Frank Dynevor. "What's he crying for?"

"For his sins," said Cyras.

The tears stood in Charles's eyes: nothing grieved him so much as for Cyras to be angry with him.

"He cries for nothing," went on Cyras, "and then they get him into the nursery and give him sugar-candy. Mamma and old Jaquet make a regular molly of him. Now, Master Charles, perhaps you'll go and get the right coat. It's his fault that I keep you waiting, Dynevor."

"I am not going," said Dynevor. "They began a row at home about my running out in the rain, so it's stopped, and I came to tell you. Here, Cy, come down this way."

The two boys, Dynevor's arm carelessly cast on the shoulder of Cyras, strolled off together along the cloisters towards the obscure exit which led to the Dark Alley, Cyras having tossed the coat on to Charley's head, nearly throwing him off his legs. Charley disengaged himself, and espying some of the college boys, with whom he kept up a passing acquaintance when at Denham, he joined them. They were emerging noisily from the schoolroom, after taking off their surplices: music had no charms for them, so they had not remained amidst the listeners in the Cathedral.

Now, there was a charity school in Denham for the sons of small parents, where plain learning was taught: the three "R's," with a smattering of history and other matters. It was a large school, its numbers averaging four or five times those of the foundation school in the Cathedral; and from time immemorial the gentlemen on the college foundation, called the King's Scholars, and the boys of the charity school had been at daggers drawn. The slight pastimes of hard abuse and stone throwing were indulged in, whenever the opposition parties came into contact and circumstances permitted, but there occurred sometimes a more serious interlude—that of a general battle. Animosity at the present time ran unusually high, and, in consequence of some offence offered by the haughty college boys in the past week, the opposition boys (favoured possibly by the unusual darkness of the afternoon) had ventured on the unheard-of exploit of

collecting in a body round the cloister gate to waylay the King's Scholars on their leaving the Cathedral at the close of afternoon service. The latter walked into the trap and were caught ; but they did not want for "pluck," and began laying about them right and left.

The noise penetrated to the other end of the cloisters, to the ears of the two lads parading there, and away they tore, eager to take part in any mischief that might have turned up. The first thing Cyrus saw was his brother Charles struggling in the hands of some half-dozen of the enemy, and being roughly handled. Of course, having been with the college boys, he was taken for one of them ; and being a meek little fellow, who stood aghast in the mêlée, instead of helping on the assault—besides looking remarkably aristocratic, a great crime in their eyes—he was singled out as being a particularly eligible target.

All the hot blood of Cyrus Baumgarten's body rushed to his face and his temper : if *he* chose to put upon Charley and "tan" him, he was not going to see others do it. He flung off his jacket and his cap, threw them to Dynevör, and with his sturdy young fists doubled, sprang upon the assailants. What a contrast, when you come to think of it ! The stately, impassive Dean, master of his Cathedral, and standing in it at the present moment, the cynosure of neighbouring eyes ; the elegant Lady Grace with her rank and beauty, both of them particularly alive to the *convenances* of civilised life ; and the two young Baumgartens just beyond earshot, taking part in a juvenile fight, as fierce as any Irish row. Ah, good doctors of divinity, fair Lady Graces, *your* sons may be just as disreputably engaged behind your backs, little as you may suspect it, unworthy of belief as you would deem it.

What would have been the upshot, it is impossible to say—broken noses certainly, if not broken legs—had not the master of the opposition boys come up : a worthy gentleman and martinet, whom the whole lot dreaded more than anything alive. He had scented, or been told of, the expedition, and he had hastened to follow it, and bring down upon those fractious heads the weight of his wrathful authority. The very moment his portly figure was caught sight of, off flew the crew in ignominious alarm, the college boys raising a derisive shout after them, and then decamping to their own homes. A good thing for them, and that it was over and done with, before their masters came out of the cathedral.

Dynevor, who was hand-in-glove with some of the senior boys, returned Cyrus's jacket and cap to him, and went away with his friends ; and the two Baumgartens were left alone. Charles was crying and shaking, Charles's nose was bleeding, and down sat Cyrus in a corner of the now deserted cloisters, and held the child to him, as tenderly as any mother could have done.

"Don't cry, Charley dear," quoth he, kissing him fondly. "I know that biggest fellow that set upon you, and I'll pay him off as sure as

he's a snob. I'd have paid them off now if they had waited, the cowards, and I don't care if they had killed me for it. Where did they hit you, Charley?"

"They hit me everywhere, Cyras," sobbed the child, who, though barely two years younger than his brother, was as a baby compared with him in hardihood and in knowledge of the world—if the remark may be applied to a young gentleman rising eleven. "Oh, how my nose bleeds!"

Cyras with his own white handkerchief kept wiping the suffering nose, kissing Charley between whiles.

"Charley, dear," he began, between the latter's sobs, "if I hit you sometimes it isn't that I want to hurt you, for I love you very much, better than anything in the world. You musn't mind my hitting you; I'm used to hit; and it'll teach you to be a man."

"Yes," breathed Charley, clinging closer to Cyras, whom, in spite of the latter's imperiousness, he dearly loved. "I know you don't do it to hurt me."

"No, that I don't. I don't hurt you ever—do I, Charley?"

"No, never," sobbed Charley. "It's only that I'm afraid you are angry with me."

"But I'm not," disclaimed Cyras. "There's not a soul in the house cares for you as I do, and I'll stand by you always, through thick and thin."

"Mamma cares for me, Cyras."

"After her fashion," returned Mr. Cyras. "She makes a girl of you, and pets you up to the skies. But I'll fight for you, Charley; I'll never let a hair of your head be touched when we go together to Eton or Rugby, whichever it's to be."

"I hope I shall get brave like you, Cy. I think I shall, when I am as big as you: nurse says you were not much better than me when you were as little."

"Oh, I'm blest, though!" returned Cyras, not pleased with the remark. "Who says it?"

"Jaquet."

"Jacquet had better say that to me. She's a nice one! I never was a molly, Charley; I never had the chance to be; she knows that, and she must have said it just to humour you. Why now, only see what a girl they make of you: they keep you in these dandy velvet dresses with a white frill. A white frill! and they don't let you stir out beyond the door, unless there's a woman at your tail to see you don't fall, or don't get lost, or some such nonsense!"

Poor unhappy, timid Charley caught up his sobbing breath.

"And then, look at mamma—taking you into her pew on Sunday! Never was such a spectacle seen before in Denham Cathedral, as for a chap of your age to sit in the ladies' seats. I'd rather be one of those snobs, than I'd be made a molly of."

"Don't call me a molly, Cy," urged the child.

"It's not your fault," returned Cyras, kissing him still, "it's theirs. You have got a brave heart, Charley, for you won't tell a lie, and you'll be brave yourself, when they'll let you. I'll make you so. I'll teach you, and I'll love you better than all of them put together. Does your nose pain you now, Charley, dear?"

"Not much. I was frightened."

A little while longer they sat there. Cyras soothing the still sobbing child, stroking his hair, wiping his eyes, whispering endearing names: and then they got up, and he led him affectionately into the Deanery, through the covered passage.

A couple of pretty objects they looked when they entered the well-lighted residence. Both their faces smeared with blood, with Charley's velvet dress and his "white frill," and Cyras's shirt front: for the latter, in his caresses, had not escaped catching the stains. The Dean and Lady Grace had not entered, for all this had taken place in a very short space of time, and the organist was still playing. Cyras smuggled Charles into the nursery.

"Oh, my patience!" uttered the nurse, who was sitting there with her charge, a lovely little lady between five and six years old, Gertrude Baumgarten, who had been kept at home from college that afternoon with an incipient cold. "You wicked boys! what have you been up to? This is your work, I know, Master Cyras!"

"Is it!—who gave you leave to know?" retorted Cyras. He was no more friendly to Jaquet than he used to be, or she to him.

Gertrude backed in fear against the wall, her eyes, haughty and blue as were her mother's, wide open with astonishment. She did not like the appearance of things, and began to cry.

"Now don't be such a little stupid, Gerty," exclaimed Cyras; "there's nothing to cry for. Charley's nose bled, and it got on to our clothes."

"Yes, it's me that's hurt, Jaquet," put in Charley, remembering his grievances and giving way again. "It isn't Cyras."

"Of course it's not," indignantly returned Jaquet, "what harm does he ever come to? You have been striking him, that's what you have been doing, Master Cyras. You've been thumping him on the nose to make it bleed."

"It's nothing to you if I have," retorted Cyras, in choler. "You just say it again, though, and I'll strike you." He disdained to say it was not so, or to defend himself; he was of by far too indifferent a temperament.

"Oh, nurse—look! look!" screamed out the little girl.

It was supplemented by a sharp scream from Charley; his nose had begun to bleed again; and at that moment there was another interruption. The room door opened, and the Dean and his wife entered: the former still wearing his surplice and hood, and carrying his tunic, for they had been hurriedly disturbed by the noise as came in from the Cathedral.

The nurse, whose temper was not a remarkably calm one and who disliked the daring Cyrus, was busy getting hot water and a basin.

"Look at him, my lady, look at him," cried she; "and it's Master Cyrus's doings."

"What does all this mean?" demanded the Dean, his eyes wandering from one boy to the other, from their faces to their clothes, his ears taking in the sobbing and the crying. "What is it, I ask?" he sternly continued, for no one had replied.

The Dean might ask, again and again, but he was none the nearer getting an answer. Charley, his head over the basin, was crying, and in too much fear and excitement to hear the question. The sight of only a cut finger had always terrified him. Cyrus had one of his independent, obstinate fits coming on, and would not open his lips in explanation or self-defence.

"Cyrus thumped Charley's nose to make it bleed, papa," said the little girl, unconsciously improving upon Jaquet's assertion.

"How dared you hit him?" exclaimed Lady Grace, turning to Cyrus.

The boy looked at her but did not answer. She took it for bravado. Her passion rose. "You are growing a perfect little savage!" And raising her delicately-gloved hand in the heat of the moment, she struck Master Cyrus some tingling blows upon his cheeks. Dr. Baumgarten, deeming possibly that to stand witness of the scene did not contribute to the dignity of the Dean of Denham, just escaped from service in his Cathedral, turned away, calling upon Cyrus to follow him.

It was not Cyrus, however, who followed the Dean, it was Lady Grace. He had gone to his own study, had laid down his cap, and was taking off his sacred vestments himself, dispensing with the customary aid of his servant. His wife closed the door.

"Ryle, how is this to end?" she asked.

"What do you mean, Grace?"

"I mean about Cyrus; but you know very well without my telling you. The boy has been indulged until he is getting the mastery of us all. He positively struck Gertrude the other day."

"As Jaquet chose to interpret it," said the Dean. "I enquired into that. Cyrus gave the child a tap on the arm. Of course he ought not to have done even that, and I punished him for it."

"You cannot see his failings, Ryle; you supply him with an unlimited command of money —"

"Unlimited!" again interrupted the Dean. "You speak without thought, Grace."

"I think too much," she replied. "I have abstained hitherto from serious remonstrance, for if ever I have interfered by a word, you have attributed it, I feel sure, to a jealous feeling, because he is not my own child. But I now tell you that something must be done:

if that boy is to stop in the house and rule it, I won't. I will not allow him to ill-treat Charles : I will not, I say."

"Hush, Grace, you are excited. Remember the day."

"I do not forget it. Your son did, probably, when he struck Charles."

"I cannot think he struck him—in that fierce manner."

"Why, you saw the proofs," she retorted. "Don't you mean to enquire into it—and punish him ?"

"I certainly do—if you will only allow me time, Grace. Much has not been lost yet."

"If you have any feeling for your other children, you will take measures by which this annoyance may be put a stop to : it is to me most irritating."

Lady Grace left the room, and the Dean rang the bell, despatching the servant who answered it for Master Baumgarten. Cyras had not yet gone the length of disobeying his father's mandates, and attended as soon as he had been, what the nurse called, "put to rights," meaning his unsightly shirt changed for a clean one. Charley, his nose shiny and swollen, but himself otherwise in order, stole in after him.

"Now, Cyras," began the Dean, "we must have an explanation, and if you deserve punishment you shall not escape it. I did not think my boy was a coward, still less that he would ill-treat his younger brother."

The colour flashed into the cheeks of Cyras, and a light into his eyes. But he would not speak.

"Come hither, Charles. Do you see his face, sir ?" added the Dean, taking the child's hand. "Are you not ashamed to look at it, and to reflect that you have caused him all this grief and pain —"

"Papa," interrupted Charles, "it was not Cyras who hurt me. It was the snobs."

"It—was—the—what ?" slowly uttered the Dean, his dignity taken a little aback.

"Those charity boys. Frank Dynev or calls them snobs, so does Cyras. I was with the college boys in the cloisters, and they set upon us ; there were five or six upon me all at once, papa ; they hit me on the nose, and I daresay they would have killed me, only Cyras came running up and fought with them, because I was not strong enough, and got me away. And then he sat down in the cloisters and nursed me as long as I was frightened, and that's how the blood got upon his clothes."

The Dean looked from one to the other. "Was it not Cyras who hurt you, then ? I scarcely understand."

"Cyras loves me too much to hurt me," cried Charley, lifting his beautiful, deeply-set brown eyes, just like Cyras's, just like the Dean's, to his father's face. "He was kissing me all the time in the cloisters ; he was so sorry I was hurt ; and he says he loves me better than

anybody else in the world, and he'll pay off that biggest snob the first time he sees him. Don't you, Cyras?"

The boy turned caressingly to Cyras. Cyras looked red and foolish, not caring to have his private affections betrayed for the public benefit, and he shook off Charley. Dr. Baumgarten drew Cyras to him, and fondly pushed his hair from his forehead.

"Tell me about it, my boy."

"Charley was just talking to some of the college boys, papa, and those horrid charity snobs —"

"Stop a bit. What do you mean by 'snobs?' Very vulgar word, Cyras, and a wrong one for you to use. Of whom do you speak?"

"Oh, you know that big parish school, papa: well, they are always setting on the college boys, and they came up to the cloisters this evening, and Charley, being with the boys, got in for his share of pummelling, and I beat the fellows off him. That's all."

"Why did you not say this to your mamma in the nursery? You made her angry with you for nothing."

Cyras shook back his head with a somewhat defiant movement.

"Mamma's often angry with me for nothing, as far as that goes. I don't care. As to Jaquet," he added, drowning a warning gesture of the Dean's, "she's always telling stories of me."

"Now what do you mean by saying 'I don't care,' Cyras? It is very wrong to be indifferent, even in speech."

"I mean nothing, papa," laughed the boy. "Only I can fight my own battles against Jaquet, and I will. She has no business to interfere with me when she hates me so much; let her concern herself with Charles and Gertrude."

The Dean left the boys together, and went in search of his wife. He found her in her chamber. She had taken off her outdoor things, and was now in her dinner dress. The attendant quitted the room as he entered it.

"Grace," said he, going up to her, "there has been a misapprehension, and I have come to set you right. Charley got into an affray with some strange boys in the cloisters (the details of which I shall make it my business to inquire into), and Cyras defended him against them—going into them no doubt like a young lion, for he possesses uncommon spirit; too much of it. We have been casting blame on Cyras, unnecessarily."

Lady Grace lifted her eyes to her husband. She knew him to be an honourable man (putting out of the question his divinity and his deanship), and that he would not assert a thing except in perfect good faith.

"Do you mean that Cyras did not beat Charles?"

"He did not. He protected him."

"Why did not Cyras say so, then?"

"His spirit in fault again, I suppose; too proud to defend himself against an unjust imputation," replied the Dean. But the Dean was

wrong, unhappily : Cyras was too carelessly indifferent to defend himself. The Dean continued : " I ordered Cyras before me, and began taking him to task. Charles, who had come in with him, spoke up eagerly, saying Cyras had fought *for* him, to defend him from his assailants, not *against* him. You should have heard the child, Grace, telling how Cyras sat down and nursed him afterwards in the cloisters, kissing him and wiping the blood from his face, and whispering him how he loved him better than anything else in the world. Grace, those two will be affectionate, loving brothers if we do not mar it."

Lady Grace felt that she had been unjust in striking Cyras, as well as guilty of an unladylike action, and perhaps she felt more contrition at the moment than the case really warranted.

" How mar it ? " she faltered.

The Dean put his arm round his wife's waist before replying. " Grace, you best know what is in your heart : whether or not there is a dislike towards Cyras rankling there. I think there is, and that it makes you unjust to him. If you are not very cautious it may sow dissension between the children."

Grace Baumgarten burst into tears, and laid her face caressingly upon her husband's breast : she loved him almost as passionately as she had ever done. " Ryle," she whispered, " if there be any such feeling, it is born of my love for you."

He smiled to himself. " I know it, my dearest ; I know that you remember he is not your child ; yet that does not make the feeling less inexcusable."

" Oh, but you are mistaken in using such a word," she spoke up, rallying herself. " Dislike ! Ryle, I do not dislike Cyras. I cannot love him as I do Charles—how can I ? and he is very troublesome and vexes me. Some boys are ten times more wearying than others ; they must try the patience of even their own mothers."

Cyras was troublesome ; one of those boys who are never still—always in some mischief or other. The Dean allowed that.

" Grace, listen. I think the boy is *made* worse than he would be ; he has hardly fair play between you and Jaquet."

" I never allow Jaquet to be unjust to him."

" Is she ever anything but unjust to him ? " returned the Dean. " Does she not bring to you tales of him continually ? making mole-hills into mountains, purposely to set you against him ? My dear, I fancy it is so."

" If I thought she did, I would discharge her to-day," spoke Lady Grace, in haughty impulse.

" Not to-day ; it is Sunday," laughed the Dean.

" I will watch," said Lady Grace. " But, Ryle, you know you do indulge Cyras too much ; you have ever done so. You may not be conscious of it. When a parent inordinately indulges a child, I do not believe he ever is conscious of it. And there are boys and boys, you know. We may indulge Charles as much as we please ; it

would never hurt him ; but it is bad for a self-willed boy like Cyras."

Lady Grace was right. But no more was said, for the steps of the boys were heard on the stairs, and she opened the door.

"Come in, Cyras ; I want you," she said, drawing him gently to her. "Your papa has been telling me that it was not you who hit Charles and made his nose bleed."

"Of course it was not me—as if I would !" said Cyras.

"But why did you not tell me so ?"

"It didn't matter," said the boy.

"It did matter. It caused me to punish you, for I thought you deserved it. I am sorry to have done so, Cyras, but the fault was yours. You should have told me the truth."

"Sometimes when you are angry with me, mamma, and I tell you the truth, you don't believe me. You believe Jaquet instead of me. I don't get fair play in this house with anybody, except papa."

The Dean glanced at his wife. This was bearing out his own hints to her.

"Jaquet hates me, mamma ; you know she always did hate me."

"I hope not, Cyras. And I do not think she would dare to say to me what was not true."

"Oh wouldn't she !" cried the bold boy. "She does it to get me into a row with you and make you punish me. Didn't she tell you it was me that made Charley's nose bleed just now, and didn't you believe her and hit me for it ? It wasn't me ; and nobody had told her it was me ; but she took and said it."

Lady Grace, struck with the argument, if not with its eloquence, paused in thought.

"It's her spite," said Cyras. "Charley and Gerty might see it is, only they are little duffers, and can't believe anything bad of Jaquet. She pets them both up, and gives them sugarsticks."

"Well, we will go to tea now, and you shall take it in my room this evening, and I'll pour it out for you," said Lady Grace, briskly, kissing both the lads.

"I have made my mind up, Ryle," said Lady Grace to her husband later. "Jaquet goes."

And, to Jaquet's infinite astonishment, she had her warning the next day. After a few moments given to getting over her discomfiture, she told her lady that at the end of the month she had been intending to give warning on her own side, for she was going to "alter her condition."

Which meant that she was about to get married. But when the name of the intended bridegroom was disclosed, it provoked some laughter from the Dean's household, especially from his eldest son. For the name was—

"Bones."

(*To be continued.*)

SOME LEAVES FROM A LIFE.

THE old town in which my girlhood was passed, and where I am now writing these slight reminiscences of former days, stands on the verge of what was once a considerable forest, of which only a few scattered vestiges now remain.

It is built with picturesque irregularity, all round and all over a lofty hill ; giving to some of the inhabitants the doubtful privilege of being able to inspect at leisure the interior of a neighbour's chimney. At the foot of this hill flows a broad placid river, spanned by many a bridge, and winding its quiet course past meadow and cornfield, past castle and spire, till it melts away and is lost in the blue distance.

Our town—we will call it Oldminster—is a favourite resort both of the artist and the antiquary ; the former finds countless subjects for his portfolio, and the latter can trace here with unusual distinctness, the stamp left by the various successive possessors of the soil. Roman, Saxon, Dane, Norman, each has left his footprint : like unto the brown ridges on the sea-shore by which we may count the steps of the ebbing tide.

Our house was a large, irregular building, having been altered and added to by many generations ; part of it was of considerable antiquity, and was believed to have been one of the last places in England where the Knights of St. John had retained an establishment. Hence its name : the Priory. There was a splendid stained glass window in this part of the house, and also some carved pillars and arches of a decidedly ecclesiastical type ; and I used often to fancy, as I sat in the broad, deep window seat, poring over "Ivanhoe" or the "Talisman" and watching the glorious flood of purple and crimson light falling over the wide staircase into the stone hall below, how the same radiance might have flashed on the armour or tinted the mantles of those old soldiers of the cross.

The principal entrance to the Priory was through stately iron gates ; but there existed another entrance that some of us liked better.

From a dusty, narrow lane, you opened a small door in the encircling wall, and you were in Paradise. Cool green lawns spread around you on every side. In spring, violets and primroses clustered at the roots of the old elm trees, pink and white blossoms scented the air, and the laburnum waved its golden sprays. In summer, the roses, pink, white, crimson, made it like the garden of an Eastern king. The primroses are there still, and June still brings its roses : but all else is changed !

I, Margaret West, was an only child, and naturally the pet and idol of my father and mother. But I was by no means lonely, for

we had hosts of relatives ; some living in grand old houses in the town, some in pretty places in the surrounding country ; and their young people, boys and girls, were often at the Priory, my dear friends and companions. As I look back to it, it seems as if our happy lives, as we grew up together, had been as one long, bright summer's day.

My father, Francis West, was the eldest. His brother, William, was the head of the principal bank in the town : a bank of no mean note, and which had its representatives in more than one foreign land. Uncle William's eldest son, Philip, entered the bank when he was of a suitable age, and I became engaged to him. Philip and I had been play-fellows in childhood, friends in our school days, and now a deeper and a stronger love had sprung up between us, and we were to be together for life.

The course of our "true love" ran smoothly. Friends on both sides gave smiling approval. There were no rivals, no misunderstandings, as in the old song :

" Some jealousy of someone's heir,
Some hopes of dying broken-hearted."

Only we were to wait until we were both older and wiser (so they said) and Philip richer, before we embarked together on our life's journey. I asked no better ; I was the happiest of the happy.

We hear discussions as to which kind of love is the most perfect : that which, beginning in early companionship and affection, and growing gradually with the progress of time, develops at last into the fulness and crown of all ; or that, which like "some glorious stranger," comes from afar, bursts suddenly into being, and transforms the whole of life in an hour ? The former has been compared to the result of the artist's slow and patient work ; the latter to the "sun picture," stamped in a moment. Unfortunately this question can never be decided, since no individual experience could contain both. Our love, Philip's and mine, was of the former kind, and we thought it the best.

Oh, happy days of youth, gone by for ever ! Is it true that "Sorrow's crown of sorrow is remembering happier things ?" I think not. I would not lose the memory of those days for anything that could now be offered me. The wild autumn wind wails round the old house, as I write, with its mournful music, and scatters the withered leaves across the lawn—the leaves, once so green, the violets of spring and the roses of summer are gone. Just so are the spring and summer of my life over, and only autumn leaves remain to tell of their departed glory. But to my garden will come once more the brightness of another spring and the glory of another summer : and I, also, look forward to "the resurrection of the dead and the life of the world to come."

II.

ONE evening in the late spring, I sat in the garden waiting as usual for Philip's visit. Over my head was a cloud of pink and white blossoms ; primroses starred the grass at my feet. The birds were still singing in the old trees, as if unwilling to lose the last hour of such a day, and the little stream, that ran through the wood at the side of our house, went by with a pleasant sound. From the town came the mellowed murmur of many tones, all softened into music by distance, and rising gently on the still evening air. There was not a cloud in the sky, nor in my happy heart.

The green door opened, and I heard Philip's quick, light step approaching, as he left the walk and turned down the narrow path leading to the little wood where I was waiting. It was later than usual, and, after the first greetings were over, it struck me that he looked pale and seemed preoccupied—excited. Before my doubt had time, however, to take any definite shape, the blow came.

" Margaret," he began, " what will you say ?—I am going away to India."

" Going away !—and to India ! Oh, Philip ! "

It was all I could gasp : my heart seemed to stand still. Seeing my sudden paleness, my dismayed emotion, Philip soothingly explained the why and the wherefore. It was necessary that one of the principals here should go over for a time to the house in Calcutta : his father considered himself too old, so he was despatching his eldest son.

" I am to stay away only two years at most, Margaret," he concluded, as he sat by me and held my cold hand in his. " And then, when I return — "

Yes, when he returned. I understood. But in the meantime, what might not happen—and the thought of parting was terrible.

In those days India was so far away. Thousands of miles lay between England and that golden land. A haze of romance hung round it then, it is true, which it has lost now, when people go by train to visit the Pyramids and take a summer trip to Cashmere. *Then* the very name of India called up visions of dusky faces with white silken turbans, of gems and gold, ivory and spices, and marvellous fabrics of strange splendour. But it was so far away ! Months must glide by before there could come any news from those travelling thither. And there were besides, deadly perils of many kinds connected with the distant East.

Philip did his best to comfort me. This voyage, he said, would be beneficial to him in every way. It would give him the experience he needed, improve his prospects, and really hasten, not retard, the date of our marriage. His father had been most kind and liberal, and had sent me a message intended to be cheering, in which he assured me that nothing could be so good for Philip as to see something of the world before he settled down.

Shall I confess what it was that gave me the keenest pain of all—though I tried at first not to recognise the thought and beat it down as selfish and disloyal? It was this; that all Philip's efforts seemed to be directed towards consoling *me*; while for himself, the prospect of change, the excitement and adventure of the undertaking threw his own regret into the background. But I struggled against the feeling; I knew that from all time woman's lot had been to wait, to watch, to stay at home; "that men must work and women must weep;" that the path of active exertion is theirs, and ours the perhaps harder task, to "suffer and be still." Like a ladye of the olden time watching, from that very comfortable eyrie denominated her "bower," her gallant knight's "receding plume," as he galloped away, I resolved to take heart, to be brave and patient, and above all not to be unjust to Philip, to whom love could not be the whole of life, though he loved me well and truly.

Then came the hurried preparations, those miserable days of excitement and suppressed anguish, when we forbear to weep, knowing that we shall have plenty of time for that by-and-by. Philip went up to London, and I sat alone in the little wood or wandered idly about the garden. I could still look upon the flowers of my Eden, "but the trail of the serpent was over them all;" sorrow and fear and change had entered there. Philip came back when all was ready to say farewell. And that chapter of our lives was closed.

III.

Most people have felt the agony of a great parting; they know the bitter aching that follows it. Time and occupation bring better things to their aid, and they brought them to mine. I settled down quietly to my usual employments, one of which was to help my dear father a good deal in his study. And so cheerfulness returned and hope began to lift its head again.

The months rolled on. Spring gave place to summer, summer to autumn, autumn to the snows of winter, and winter to spring again. And so, by-and-by, the time approached for Philip's return. Uncle William began already to suggest, half jestingly, first one house and then another for our future home; and my dear mother was planning all kinds of dainty dresses for the bridal outfit.

One morning, entering my father's study as usual, I found him in his accustomed place at the library table, his Bible and some books of reference open before him, and the pen he had been using close to his hand. But that hand would never guide the pen again; the noble face was still in death. He had gone from his search after truth here to the perfect truth and cloudless light above.

That blow shattered two lives. My mother never recovered the shock; and when Philip came home to our desolate house, he knew that his return had been in vain, for that I could never leave her

while she lived. He had come to fetch me ; yes, to fetch me ; for it had been decided that he was to return to the East for a few years, his presence there having produced excellent results. And he had liked his sojourn so well that he had gladly acceded, only stipulating to be allowed to return for his wife. He had brought me, with many beautiful and costly gifts, a little sketch of the pretty palm-tree-shaded bungalow which was to have been our future home.

Poor Philip ! the meeting to which we had both looked forward to joyfully was a sad one, and the parting was sadder still. The second parting ! We could not of course now make plans for the future.

Whether either of us allowed our hearts to glance at a future time when I might be free, I cannot tell. But that time came. All too soon, I thought, in my grief and love. My mother, my darling mother, was laid to rest. The early violets and primroses she had loved better than all other flowers were strewn upon her grave, and I, an orphan, was alone in my childhood's home. My home now ; alas, only mine !

Leaving me to indulge my sorrow for a little time, friends rallied round me, and I found my future all planned out. I was to go out to Philip. My dear uncle would not allow me any hesitation or delay. As Philip could not then come home, he said it was my duty to go to him.

He arranged everything ; and, when the time of sailing came, conveyed me to London himself, and saw me on board the vessel in which my passage was taken, a fine East Indiaman. And so, under the special charge of her commander, Captain Dare, and with a heart still full of sorrow and a head bewildered by the suddenness of the change, I bade farewell to all familiar things, and was soon tossing on the wide ocean, in one of the state cabins of the good ship *Orontes*.

IV.

OUT on the wild, dark sea ! How strangely desolate I felt !—especially in the earlier part of the long and dreary voyage. But time and use soothe all things. Captain Dare was kind and attentive; his wife, a dear elderly lady, was like a mother to me. I gradually improved in health and spirits, and grew to look hopefully and eagerly forward to the meeting with Philip.

Nearer, and nearer yet, the stately ship making her good way. At last, all preliminaries surmounted, we glided into harbour, and were speedily surrounded by boats from the shore. Friends and relatives came crowding on board to greet my fellow passengers. And I began to look anxiously out for the one face I longed to see.

By degrees all the passengers landed, and still no one came for me. I began to feel terribly depressed and uneasy. Something, I felt sure, must be wrong : but what ? Was Philip ill ? Or had he failed to hear of our arrival ? My good friend, Mrs. Dare, remained on

board : "She would not leave me," she smilingly said, until I was in better hands. Of course she knew what I had come out for and to whom I was going.

At last, when I had grown quite sick with apprehension, and Mrs. Dare was gently laughing at me, a lady and gentleman came on board, enquired for me, and introduced themselves to me and to the Captain as Mr. and Mrs. Stanley ; and they proceeded to invite me to stay at their house. Of course I enquired for Mr. Philip West. Mr. Stanley answered, with what looked like a strangely-embarrassed air, that he was gone "up country." "You had better go below with Miss West," he added hurriedly, to his wife.

She caught my hand as we descended to the empty saloon, and put me on the sofa beside her. I waited, with a sinking spirit, for what I knew must be bad tidings ; though my poor heart, with all its fears and forebodings, never went near the truth. Philip was dead, or Philip was sick unto death—that was what I thought.

Mr. Stanley had followed us down. He paced the cabin ; his wife only looked at me through her glistening tears ; and neither spoke. It seemed the one was leaving it to the other.

"Is he dead?" I gasped. "Is he dying? Oh, tell me anything but that," I implored in my great dread.

"Tell her, Mary," said Mr. Stanley, "for I cannot." And he went up on deck.

"Tell me," I added, turning to her, my lips dry, my heart beating to suffocation. "Whatever the truth, I can bear it better than this suspense."

"My poor child, my dear young lady," said the good woman, tenderly, as she drew my head down upon her shoulder, "how shall I tell you? He is married."

For a few minutes I suppose I lost consciousness. I was stunned. But when that passed away, there swept through me such a surging storm of anguish, bitterness—almost shame—that I cannot bear to recall it even now. "To be wrath with one we love doth work like madness in the brain."

The hours that followed were awful hours. I asked no questions ; I wished for no particulars ; the bare fact was enough for me. Philip had played me false ; he had taken to himself another love, and made her his wife. And though I, of course, could not avoid hearing scraps and small details of the history, I shall not record them here.

• My new friends, Philip's friends, Mr. and Mrs. Stanley, took it for granted that I should go on shore with them to their house, at least, for the present ; but I steadily refused to leave the ship. I would return in her to England, I said ; nothing should induce me to set foot in India—to encounter, perhaps, the pity or the ridicule of strangers. No, I felt wounded to the death, and I would creep away somewhere and die alone.

Then my brain gave way ; an attack of fever set in, and for many days I was in a land of shadows. Dreary and desolate enough they were, yet a blessed escape from reality. Nothing could exceed the anxious kindness of the Captain and his wife ; Mrs. Stanley also was often on board : and I struggled back to life at last. I was young and strong, and God helped me through it all. And we set sail for home again.

The voyage did me good, and much of the bitterness passed away. The first face I saw was that of my kind uncle—which at one time I had almost hoped never more to see. He had hurried up to London to be on the spot when the ship should reach the docks ; not, however, expecting that I should be in it.

Mr. Stanley, who was in fact connected with our bank in Calcutta, had written to him to tell of Philip's marriage, even before I arrived in India ; and my poor, sorrowing, uncle had come to town to learn from the captain and his wife, particulars of *me* ; of how I had borne the shock, of the state in which they had left me.

But I do not think he was much surprised to see me. I tried to hide my own feelings to comfort *him*. He and I fully understood one another.

Even though my house had not been let for a term, I could not have gone back to it, and Uncle William wisely and kindly did not press me to go to his. I went to a relative who lived at some distance from my old home. The idea was that I should be there for only a few months, but I stayed there for years. Mrs. James West was as a tender mother to me, and her daughters were like sisters. Thankful was I for the gentle kindness lavished on me, and above all for the rest and peace that came slowly back to me in God's good time. Deadly wounds take long to heal, and, somehow, at first I did not *wish* to be resigned.

So the years and the years went by ; years of quietness and peace. At length the calm was broken. One day there came an Indian letter, re-enclosed to me from the bank at Oldminster. It was from Philip : the first word I had had from him all that dreary time.

He was dying, it said. And, indeed, he had passed away before it reached me, though I knew it not. He was dying : and he could not die in peace till he had asked my forgiveness. It was very short : he had suffered deservedly, he said, for his brief madness ; his home had long been solitary ; and now he was going to confide to my care his only child, his "little Margaret," who would be worse than an orphan at his death. And then he bade God bless me—and, farewell.

I wrote to my Uncle William. I bade my kind relatives a sorrowful good-bye. My old home was vacant, and I hastened to retake my abode in it, there to await little Margaret's arrival. Old friends greeted me, old dependants rallied round me, and I began to be happy again.

Margaret came : a fair, sweet, gentle girl, with Philip's eyes and Philip's smile. Oh, how she brought back the love to me !—the old love as well as the new.

And now life has once more a deep, living interest for me, and hope is springing up afresh : not for me, but for others. I have grown again to love the dear shadows that haunt this, my childhood's home, and not to shrink from the memories of the past. There are many changes in the old time : the boys and girls are become men and women ; the men and women are married and gone : some grey heads are laid low, and I read well-remembered names on many a memorial stone in the churchyard ; but Uncle William is hearty still. My child, my Margaret, is a solemn, holy trust ; a never failing source of interest and pleasure ; for she is all I could wish her to be —good, pure, fair, gentle, loving and very tender to me. Sometimes I wonder if she knows.

And now that I have done with plans on my own account, I am beginning them over again for her. When the primroses are dotting the grass, and the pink blossoms are in the trees, and the soft spring twilight falls on all around, often, as of old, the green door opens, and another Philip and another Margaret are wandering side by side in the pleasant garden. I have rheumatism occasionally now and am afraid of the dew ; the dew which does not hurt them ; and I sit indoors and pray God to bless them—my children : and, if it may be so, guard them from such a sorrow as that which desolated me.

Perhaps some day they will take my place here, for the Priory shall be Margaret's, and glad young steps fill the old rooms with joyous life. The Shadow of Death for me will have passed away and given place to the blessed Land where all is sunshine—to which Philip has gone on before.

E. E. W.

JOHN DAVIDSON.

BY THE AUTHOR OF "ADONAIIS, Q.C."

I.

MISS Victoria Egerton sat in a secluded corner of a ball-room, somewhat discontentedly scanning the faces of the dancers just now pacing and circling, to the music of a string band, through the figures of the Lancers. Suddenly she raised herself a little and looked steadily over to the door, her expression slowly brightening into interest.

It was a large ball for a private one, and there were plenty of pretty faces to be seen at it; but there was certainly not one other so pretty or so full of subtle fascination as Miss Egerton's.

The ball was being held at the house of Mrs. Hattley, an elder sister of Miss Egerton's, in the suburbs of a large manufacturing town. This elder of the two sisters, although of course an Egerton like Victoria—granddaughter of an Earl and second cousin to some of the oldest families in England—had, on receiving an offer of marriage from Mr. Hattley, the famous millionaire cotton-spinner, some few years ago, gladly accepted it. Victoria had first been horrified, and then had tried to laugh her sister out of her resolution.

The two girls were at the time living on the bounty of a maiden aunt in London. It was not nice, living on any aunt's bounty, the elder sister argued very sensibly. And then she was distinctly plain. Victoria had considered indignantly that any Egerton could do better than this. So a storm had raged between them for a little while, the aunt unexpectedly supporting Victoria; but it all ended in Sophia Egerton accepting the offer.

Mr. Hattley, a plain-mannered, middle-aged man, had, to tell the truth, waited very complacently for his answer, of course, knowing nothing of the storm. To do Victoria justice, it was more on account of the man's being so decidedly middle-aged and of such distinctly plain manners, than for anything else, that she had objected. Sophia was not pretty, but she was a sparkling, spirited girl of twenty. The Egerton women were always spirited. However, in spite of this opposition, the marriage had taken place, and then Mr. Hattley and Sophia had gone to settle down in Bremingly, and Victoria, with the maiden aunt, had started for a town in Germany. After two years in the German town and another year travelling hither and thither, Victoria had come on a long visit to Bremingly to her sister's. In the carriage on the way from the railway station, Mrs. Hattley had promised her young sister some pleasant society.

"It isn't a nice town," laughed the girl, glancing out at the smoky atmosphere, "but I'm glad it contains nice people."

"Oh, I hardly know any of *them*," answered Mrs. Hattley, drawing herself up a little. "I referred to people who are staying with me."

"And how does Mr. Hattley like that?" said Victoria, after staring for a moment at her sister.

"I don't know, I'm sure," replied Mrs. Hattley, still more stiffly.

"Well, Sophia," said the girl, as they got out at the portico of Mr. Hattley's palatial residence: "I will only remark that when you began so sensibly by marrying Mr. Hattley, it was a pity you did not continue in the same path."

Then, soon after this home-coming, had followed the ball.

As Victoria sat thus, with her head a little raised, looking earnestly over at the door, Mrs. Hattley came up unobserved and touched her on the shoulder.

"Absorbed in your mania, as usual, Victoria," she said, a little grimly, but casting a quick, loving glance into the girl's beautiful face—she adored her younger sister.

Victoria had never been without a mania of one sort or another since the days of her childhood. It was part of her nature always to be enthusiastic over something. About a year ago she had chanced on a passion for phrenology and physiognomy. During this year she had probably read at least half the books that ever were written on the subjects, and claimed, besides, to have made several important discoveries on her own account. Mrs. Hattley complained that this mania was more grievous than any of the others, for it not only exceeded them in power, but actually appeared to be growing stronger as it became older. Victoria started delightedly round at Mrs. Hattley's touch on her shoulder.

"Sophia," she said, in a quick undertone, "who is the young man standing in that nearest doorway? He has just come in."

"In the nearest doorway," repeated Mrs. Hattley, turning to look. "Oh," rather indifferently, "that is John Davidson."

She studied him in the same absorbed way for a moment longer. "A most remarkable forehead, Sophia," she said, energetically; "a forehead which may prove exceedingly serviceable to me in many ways. Please go round and bring John Davidson here."

Mrs. Hattley attempted, as usual, to remonstrate.

"It is really perfectly ridiculous, Victoria. Besides, I saw you dancing with Sir Archibald. Where is he?"

"If you don't go and secure John Davidson," said the girl, still furtively watching, "he may escape me. I know every line of Sir Archibald's face, and each line is more uninteresting than the other. I sent him away to look for my fan. I shall not dance again to-night."

A few minutes later, with a somewhat indifferent grace, Mrs. Hattley, a little flushed by her repeated incursions about the outskirts of the Lancers, returned with the young man from the doorway.

"Mr. John Davidson—Miss Egerton," she introduced, frigidly.

"How do you do, Mr. John Davidson. Sit down," said Victoria;

and there was so much eagerness in her tone that Mrs. Hattley, already sweeping haughtily away, shivered as if from a sudden chill. This was the very last time, she said to herself, that she should ever encourage Victoria in her mania.

The young man had meanwhile sat down as requested ; a little surprised at the warmth of his reception. He had not merely, as Miss Egerton had said, a remarkable forehead—every one of his clear-cut, strongly-marked features was equally so. Just as Miss Egerton was making a hasty study of his profile, he turned and fastened his eyes—grey and steady and piercing—upon her. He had followed Mrs. Hattley, on his side also, with indifference ; and first the girl's face and then her name had struck him. Of course this must be Mrs. Hattley's sister—the beautiful Miss Egerton. Yes ; and she was very beautiful.

Meanwhile Miss Egerton had made her hurried study ; and now launched headlong into conversation just as any other young lady, not a physiognomist, might have done.

"What a very disagreeable town Bremingly is," she remarked.

The grey eyes, which had been softening into an unconscious smile, suddenly clouded. Mr. John Davidson knew all about the views Mrs. Hattley had as to Bremingly and its people ; and, of course, Miss Egerton was her sister.

"I am sorry you think so," he answered, gravely. He was sorry ; he had been remarking what a frank, sympathetic expression the girl had, and it struck him as remarkable that she should hold the same narrow view as Mrs. Hattley.

She noticed the change of expression in the eyes, and understood the reason for it.

"Oh, but I was only alluding to the smoke, you know," she explained, laughing a little ; "and even to that in a general sense. In the particular case of Mr. Hattley's tallest chimney at the manufactory, I rather admire it. I can see the top of that chimney in the distance from my bedroom window, over the trees of the garden. I always rose early abroad, and I have not got out of the habit yet ; and when I am dressed I sit down on the window-sill and meditate upon the white smoke rising out of that tall red chimney up to the blue, quiet sky. Oh, yes, I was not thinking of what I said. I am very fond of Bremingly."

He kept his eyes fixed on her intently ; he could not decide whether or not she was laughing at him.

"A very good subject for meditation it might prove to you or to any one. It ought to touch your human sympathies, you know, by making you think of all the deft, patient fingers busy at work at the looms below ; and, to move the artistic side of your nature, there is the thought of the looms themselves."

She bent forward eagerly. "I know I am very hard-hearted, but I seem to lose all recollection of the people just in that very thought

of the flying looms. I picture them to myself with all their vibrating, hurrying hands, and revolving spokes, and droning little wheels, and great, silent, big wheels, until I verily seem to be standing in the midst of them. Machinery in motion has all the awe-inspiring power of some of the grand phenomena of nature."

The dancers were still pacing to and fro ; all the gay dresses glittering in the gaslight ; the buzz of talk and laughter mingling with the music. He looked away from the girl straight in amongst them ; for some reason or other she had touched him strangely.

"Yes; that dull droning of the wheels, how often I have listened to it," he said at length, in an entirely new tone of voice. "There is no music on earth capable of moving me more deeply."

"And yet you are passionately fond of music of other kinds," she remarked, with a quick look at him.

She had found out this from the shape of his brow—but he was not to know that. She was fathoming all the deepest recesses of his nature ; she had touched him again.

"There is very little good music to be heard in Bremingly," he answered, trying to speak indifferently. "I run up to London if there is anything particular going on ; and I am often abroad."

"You paint, don't you ?" she enquired, in the same eager way.

He almost laughed now, a sudden revulsion of feeling coming to him. The girl was so quick with her questions, she did not even give him time to know his own surprise.

"As much as I have time for," he answered, glancing drolly round at her. "Yes, I am musical, and I paint, and I always was a very good arithmetician. But when I have said that, I am afraid I have said about all. I hope you are not determined to find out very much more. I am a poor linguist, for instance. What scrapes I got myself into at Antwerp, last week ! And then I have not always a particularly patient temper."

She met his fun-lit eyes with a look as comical.

"I see ; and if I don't take care I shall begin to try it. That is what you would have me understand. By-the-way, which paintings particularly impress you in the Antwerp galleries ?"

For an hour and more Miss Egerton and Mr. John Davidson, resolute against all interruptions, sat in this corner and talked of the Antwerp galleries. At the end of that time it was as if they had known each other for years.

The same evening, after the ball was over, Mrs. Hattley attempted once more to remonstrate a little with her sister.

"Victoria, love," she said, "I really think Sir Archibald felt that you had neglected him : and Mr. Beauchamp-Eanniston simply left the ball-room."

But Victoria had been standing at the top of the grand staircase to catch Mrs. Hattley, and she was not to be distracted by such information as this.

"Oh, Sophia, I thank you so much for introducing me to Mr. John Davidson. I have spent a most delightful evening in deciphering his forehead, and have besides discovered several important characteristics about him."

But Mrs. Hattley, with a gesture of impatience, had already passed on to her room.

II.

"Who is Mr. Davidson?"

It was the morning after the ball, and Victoria stood, with her walking things on, fastening her gloves and speaking to her sister just preparatory to going out. She had been receiving some commission for a fancy-wool shop, and still held a bundle of flossy silk in her one hand as she buttoned the glove with the other. In the middle of the buttoning she asked the above question.

"Mr. John Davidson, pray," corrected Mrs. Hattley; "everyone always calls him so. You see there is another Mr. Davidson we know, a very important man indeed, not far from Bremingly. Oh, Mr. John Davidson is really a mere nobody—Mr. Hattley's manager in fact. But he has made some important invention regarding looms, which has brought him into notice, and so, of course, we have to be civil to him. I positively do not understand, Victoria, what you can find so interesting about that young man."

A few minutes later Miss Egerton was wending her way along the crowded suburban high-road leading into the heart of Bremingly. It was a brilliant August morning, and she had on a cool toilette of somewhat delicate shade. As she came fair into the sunshine of the high-road, she put up her parasol with such intense earnestness of manner, that an observer would have judged her in great anxiety as to the probable effect of the sun on her dress.

In point of fact, however, she was completely absorbed in a thought of an entirely different nature. She had studied Mr. John Davidson's forehead last night very carefully, and yet had failed to decipher the existence of this inventive genius of which she had just heard from Mrs. Hattley. This was very serious.

As she walked on thus in profound and particularly sweet-looking gravity, she lifted her eyes and became aware that Mr. John Davidson was just crossing the high-road before her into a side-street. His face was turned towards her—a singularly grave expression on it too—and as she looked he lifted his hat.

Obeying a sudden impulse, she made him a somewhat excited little sign to stop. When she had crossed over and found him standing still, grave and a little pale, waiting for her, she felt almost confused, and could not imagine why she had made him stop.

"Good-morning, Mr. Davidson," she faltered, with heightened colour.

"Good-morning; I hope you are not tired with last night's dancing. I wonder to see you out so early." He was perfectly kind and composed, looking very neat and gentlemanly in his plain grey clothes, but he was evidently expecting her to say why she had stopped him. There were some papers in his hand, and after this first remark he stood in silence, evidently waiting.

But in the one flash of her disturbed blue eyes up to Mr. John Davidson's face, Miss Egerton had recovered confidence. No, she said to herself, she would never have suspected him of this inventive genius; she must, whatever it cost, investigate further. She was writing a paper on this very subject.

"I am going this way," she said, with sweet and easy dignity, and with a little well-bred glance of surprise at his expectant attitude. Then she began walking up the cross-street. Somewhat hurriedly, Mr. John Davidson joined her. Miss Egerton had begun at once again about the Antwerp galleries; and turning her beautiful eyes very frequently round on Mr. Davidson, unheeding the changes in the road, she talked steadily on, amidst the dust and heat, upon the same subject.

Every time Miss Egerton's eyes were turned on him, Mr. John Davidson met them. Beautiful as they were, and sweet, there was a certain scrutinizing look in them which puzzled and a little irritated him. The truth was, he had been haunted and pursued ever since last night by the recollection of Victoria, but he was a little disappointed in her that she could deliberately have waved him to stop to walk down this cross-street with him. He answered her queries as to the pictures with rather less evident interest than he had exhibited yesterday; from time to time even a little stiffly. Perhaps, besides everything else, he was the least bit tired of the Antwerp galleries.

Meantime Victoria was so absolutely enwrapped in her vexation at having failed in such an important point of discernment that she was barely conscious of what she was saying. No, no, she would never have known. Was this all the progress that a year's study had brought her, she asked herself with stern bitterness, an almost tragic expression for the moment flashing into her eyes. She had thought herself a clever physiognomist and phrenologist, and here was a great inventor and she would never have known it. Enthusiastically earnest in her hobby, Victoria's distress was very real. At last, almost involuntary, she put it into words.

"I hear," said she suddenly, with a slight quiver in her tone, "that you are an inventor. I should never have guessed it."

Mr. John Davidson started and quailed. It was of course an awkward remark of Victoria's, quite unworthy of her. Many and many a time before now, not infrequently in a pause of conversation in some drawing-room, people had said, across the room, to John Davidson, that they understood he was an inventor, adding an enquiry as to the nature of his invention. But these had been people visibly incapable

of comprehending the cruel feeling of laceration such dragging forth, with rough grasp, into light, of a delicate and dear idol can cause. He had got into the way of expecting such questions from people of this sort, and of setting his lips and bracing himself up to answer steadily, but this had descended on him just now like a thunderbolt.

All the colour flooded his brow; but, before he had had time to reply, a strange, soft, sweet change had swept into Victoria's face.

"Hark," she said, pausing and holding up her hand in a listening attitude. "Oh, Mr. Davidson, hark!"

They had just turned into a narrow, very quiet lane, only some fifty yards long, a short cut between two busy streets. It went in a sort of semi-circle, and at the point where Victoria had paused, where there was a deserted two-storied house, came the dull roar of machinery in motion.

At Miss Egerton's abrupt call to harken, Mr. Davidson stood, crossing his arms with a rapid movement and bending his head a little.

There was something going, some great piece of machinery, louder than all the rest, just inside the window, with a thud and a whirl, then a rasping sound and a whirl again. Slowly Mr. Davidson raised his face, all the pain and embarrassment of a few moments ago gone from it, a strange smile hovering about his lips, his eyes slightly dim.

"Yes, I hear," he said, in a tone with a soft ring in it; "it is a fine sound; I have listened to it before. That is my loom."

He had turned his face round, in his strange slow way, without altering his bent attitude. Miss Egerton, her beautiful features radiant, met his eyes. A stranger and softer expression than any flashed into both their faces and was gone. Miss Egerton started and went hurrying down the lane, Mr. John Davidson following her.

Neither of them spoke. Miss Egerton was trembling, she could not have told why; an odd choking sensation at her throat; feeling, too, as if a dozen years had come and gone since she entered the lane; feeling as though the old life were long since dead, and this, a new era, had now begun for her. Mr. Davidson was pale and grave as when she had waved him to stop at the entrance to the cross-street. Swift as lightning a total revulsion of feeling came to Miss Egerton. What was the explanation of her own intense emotion? How dared this man call it forth in her? She abruptly burst into a little peal of laughter.

"Fancy my listening to a loom under a window!" she cried.

Mr. John Davidson paused, raised his head with a jerk and looked blankly before him; then turned a searching and rapid glance round at the girl, as though this had fallen upon him with such incongruity that he was half unable to comprehend.

Suddenly he paced on with increased rapidity, a terrible change coming to his eyes.

And he had spoken to this girl of his loom!

They were now at the door of Mr. Hattley's factory. Not a word

had crossed either of their lips since Miss Egerton's little mocking remark.

They paused at the door of the factory and Mr. Davidson turned to her, his face expressive of cold disapproval.

"I have come all this way past the woolshop with you," she said, with a little attempt at bravado, "and now I think you ought to go back with me."

"Most willingly," replied Mr. John Davidson, frigidly. And before she could prevent him he had wheeled round and walked to the end of the street with her. At the door of the woolshop he lifted his hat and left her.

It was later in the day, and even warmer, when Victoria got back to Mrs. Hattley's, and in the quiet solitude of her own room she threw herself into an easy chair and burst into a passionate flood of tears.

III.

MORE than a month had passed. It was the last day of September—a chilly, windy morning—and Mrs. Hattley, turning into the courtyard of the factory, in her handsomely-appointed barouche, pulled her sable mantle closer and shivered. As the carriage drew up at the portion of the building where Mr. Hattley's offices were situated, Mr. John Davidson appeared at a doorway. Mrs. Hattley alighted hastily and shook hands very graciously.

During the past month John Davidson had been frequently at the Hattleys'. Mr. Hattley, on the point of starting for an important business trip to America, had much to settle with his manager. Mrs. Hattley had, at the beginning, almost felt offended at Mr. Davidson's extreme formality of manner both to her and Victoria. Often Mr. Hattley would invite him to stay dinner after the business meetings, but it was not often that he would allow himself to be persuaded. It was not that Mrs. Hattley cared much about John Davidson's opinion; but there was something particularly galling in so very evident a resolution that their acquaintanceship should not develop into intimacy. If there was to be any such ban at all, she remarked to Victoria, it should certainly have been on their side, and Victoria had assented.

When all was said, the man was young and good-looking and gentlemanly and talented. Mr. Hattley predicted all sorts of future greatness for him, and Mrs. Hattley, spirited and popular and young herself, did not quite like that he should look so coldly on her and her pretty sister. However, she was glad that Victoria seemed to have lost all interest in deciphering his forehead.

Then a change had come. He had suddenly grown very markedly interested in all pertaining to Victoria, and Victoria, on her side, had appeared to return to the scrutiny of the forehead with vigour. In the middle of this Mr. Hattley had started for America.

Just before his departure his wife had managed to whisper a word of her alarm to him, and he first had opened his placid blue eyes, and then had laughed and said he did not feel himself entitled to interfere.

Then she had tried reasoning with Victoria. There was such a thing, she assured her beautiful sister very gravely, as compromising oneself by studying even a man's forehead too seriously. Victoria had laughed still more than Mr. Hattley.

As the days went on and things seemed to be becoming more pronounced, Mrs. Hattley decided that some serious action must be taken. Victoria was undeniably a great beauty and belonged to an excellent family. The very contemplation of such an union was ridiculous.

She had ordered her carriage this morning, leaving Victoria absorbed in the contemplation of a miniature loom, and had driven along the dusty roads to the factory, determined on what she was to do. The first person she saw, coming out of a side doorway, was John Davidson.

She went over and shook hands with him particularly graciously.

"It is so bitterly chilly," she remarked. "I quite regretted all the way having ordered an open carriage."

"I am sorry there is no fire in here," said Mr. Davidson, opening the door of a little private office. "I can easily have it lighted."

"Oh, no, thank you," she answered; "I am not going to stay." She spoke hurriedly and with a certain trouble in her manner. John Davidson's steady eyes were noting her unusual confusion, and she knew that it was so. "I—I have had a telegram from my husband. He has arrived quite safely at Chicago," she ended, feeling unequal to proceed with what she had to say at once.

"Yes, the journey so far appears to have been remarkably pleasant," he answered, politely. "I had a telegram from him this morning myself."

"Oh, well, Mr. Davidson, the fact is, it was not exactly about the telegram I came. I have something I wish to say to you, and I can only hope that you will accept it in the spirit in which it is spoken. I consider it right to explain to you now what I think my sister Victoria ought to have explained herself at the outset, in case of any misunderstanding on your part—that, being exceedingly devoted to the study of physiognomy, and judging your face and forehead a remarkable one, she has been ardently cultivating your society with a view of improving her knowledge of the science. Mr. Davidson, if you unhappily have mistaken this interest of my sister's for a deeper feeling, I can only say that I regret much that it should be so, and I would ask you to remember, should you be inclined to think hardly of Victoria, that she is very young."

It was not strictly true all this that she was saying to him—not true to the letter; but she looked him straight in the face as she said

it. She was aware that she was not acting honourably in thus misrepresenting what she knew to be her sister's feelings ; but, having made up her mind, she deliberately did it.

Not the faintest quiver of change came to his expression. After Mrs. Hattley finished speaking a perfectly dead silence followed, broken only by the loud ticking of a clock on the mantelpiece.

"I must thank you very much for this warning," said Mr. John Davidson at length, "of which the forethought is so remarkable that you will pardon its taking me completely by surprise. Under the circumstances, however, does it not strike you that any such warning has been a little unnecessary ?"

"Under what circumstances ?" enquired Mrs. Hattley, drawing herself up and flushing. Mr. Davidson's attitude was still gravely and gracefully polite, but the look of repressed, and very contemptuous, amusement in eyes and mouth there was no longer any mistaking.

"I allude to my immediate departure for America. I start for Liverpool this afternoon. It is true that I must return here ere I set sail ; but virtually, after to-day, I shall have said 'good-bye' to Bremingley. As Mr. Hattley will probably intrust me with the carrying out of the arrangements for our new factories there, it will, in all likelihood, be a year or two before I get back again. Before that time I feel perfectly assured your sister will have removed all danger out of my way by definitely levelling her researches on some object more worthy their attention. Nevertheless, Mrs. Hattley, I must thank you once again for your extreme forethought on my account."

She had complained of feeling cold, and the repose of her manner had over and over again been adjudged perfect ; but with a crimson flush on her face she was hurrying out of the office in a way she would have condemned in her own housemaid.

"This is surely very sudden ?" she managed to stammer.

"So far as the early train this afternoon goes, yes ; but a business man's time, you know, Mrs. Hattley, is never his own. I regret that I shall not have an opportunity of giving your sister a final physiognomical interview. You will wish her all success from me in the prosecution of her scientific studies."

A few minutes later Mrs. Hattley, in a mingled fever of indignation and humiliation such as she had never known before, was driving rapidly homewards. She had gone to this man and spoken as she had done, and all the time he had been thinking about them so little that he had never even cared to let them know of his coming departure.

Stay ; he must have told Victoria ; yes, and this was why Victoria had laughed when she had warned her against the danger of such an intimacy. It was too bad, too unkind of Victoria, not to have explained matters.

Arrived at home, the tears of vexation rising in her eyes as John

Davidson's face of repressed amusement presented itself to her mental vision, she went at once, indignantly, to her sister.

"Victoria," she began, "why did you not tell me John Davidson was going away to America?" Then, as Victoria's start spoke more plainly than words: "What! you did not know either! He is leaving early this afternoon, and will not be back for a year or two. Just to think," she went on, a sudden and very illogical feeling of anger sweeping across her at John Davidson's indifference to her sister, as she noticed the strange bent attitude Victoria's figure had taken: "Just to remember the kindness we have shown that man, and he does not even tell us he is going away, or care to say good-bye. Is it not too humiliating?"

But Victoria, the bright and strong and high-spirited, answered nothing at all. She had fainted.

It was evening; a windy, dusty evening—just such as the morning had been premonitory of; and Victoria, a long cloak over her black lace dress, was beating against it alone—away down amidst the crowds in the city. Rough workmen on their way home; and pre-occupied clerks; and bustling message boys; and apple-sellers shivering at their stands—hardly one but turned a more or less curious glance after the girl's graceful, hurrying figure.

She went rapidly on, without once raising her eyes. It was still very early evening, but from end to end of the sky there was nothing but a dead, lavender-coloured gloom, that cast a dreary shadow over everything. By-and-bye Victoria turned into the little lane passing the back of the factory. For the first time she put back her veil and looked up.

She had reached the angle of the lane, above which towered the back of the factory, and now came to a dead stand there.

The lane was perfectly deserted, and she stood in the middle and fastened her eyes feverishly on the building she had been determined to come to: to gaze just once at that building before putting aside for ever all old thoughts, and had stepped away unseen in her absorbing unhappiness, indifferent as to what alarm Mrs. Hattley might suffer. She would never be happy again, she told herself; never be a free, light-hearted girl again. The wound might be partially healed in the years to come, but she would never be quite the same woman again. She had loved John Davidson, and he had slighted her.

Work was all over for to-night. The great grey back of the building, at which she stood gazing, was silent as the grave. From the slow deepening of the gloom overhead it seemed as if there might soon be rain.

All at once, as Miss Egerton stood there, a sudden sound made her start round.

John Davidson, whom she had believed to be miles away in the hurrying train, was standing beside her.

His head was a little bent forward ; he was straining his piercing eyes at her as if, from the mere turn of her attitude, he would fathom her to the very soul.

How well he loved her ! Little did Mrs. Hattley think that the very first idea of his departure had come to him whilst the terrible purported disclosure as to Victoria's feelings was being made. He knew at once, in that moment, that his only hope out of a misery which might end in the destruction of his whole future, lay in the instant excitement of new scenes, a new line of life and thought. It never occurred to him to doubt Mrs. Hattley in the slightest. He remembered all ; the way Victoria had looked at him ; her laugh while listening under the window of the factory. Of course she had been mocking him all along. How that laugh haunted and stung him. He had announced himself summoned abroad, and made hasty preparations for leaving by an afternoon train. Then a chance had delayed him until evening.

He had been making some indispensable purchases ; bidding smiling adieu from time to time too, with a canker-worm bitter as death at his heart, and talking much of the new American factories.

Suddenly, in the very middle of one of these adieus, he had been struck dumb by the sight of Victoria's hurrying figure. Tearing himself away unceremoniously, leaving his friend looking after him in surprise, he had swiftly followed her, filled with a vague hope he could not have defined. He had come fair up after her into the lane here, and had found her enwrapped in contemplation of the point he, too, only a little earlier, had been contemplating with sad emotion.

"Victoria," he burst out, "I have been deceived ; it was not true about the physiognomy ; or supposing it to have been true at first—you love me now. You have loved me—oh, tell me that it is so—from the day that we stood here together listening to my loom."

It had come so suddenly on her. In the middle of the whirl of her other emotions she had an awful sensation of fear at the wild beating of her own heart. She could not move. She raised her eyes and looked at him and waited until she could speak.

"From that day—certainly," she answered, distinctly, at last. "I cannot attempt to deny it. I think, even, that I had loved you from the night I first saw you enter the ball-room. But what does it matter ?—you are going away."

He came forward and closed his two hands tenderly over one of hers—his features, that had been set so firmly, quivering with deep emotion. He had never, not even a moment ago, dreamed of such an intoxicating answer as this.

"Never, now," he said, brokenly. "Ah, Victoria, it was for your sweet sake that I was leaving ; and for your sweet sake I will remain."

LETTERS FROM MAJORCA.

BY CHARLES W. WOOD, F.R.G.S., AUTHOR OF "THROUGH HOLLAND,"
"UNDER NORTHERN SKIES," ETC., ETC.



like a jeu-de-mot ; an indiscretion of which I am incapable. But I cannot quite trace it out, and the phrase must go.

Having started the subject, perhaps you would like a description of this Fonda de Mallorca, and of our daily life, as it has passed up to the present moment.

Do not picture us as revelling in all the luxuries one has grown accustomed to in this fast expiring nineteenth century. It has come to this certain fact in travelling, that mere comfort is not enough. We must have refinement and luxury in the form of painted ceilings and gilded walls and thickly carpeted floors. The cuisine must be perfect, the appointments without flaw. Palaces of a hundred years ago were not more gorgeous than the inns of to-day, whilst monarchs who swayed sceptres, whose smiles were promotion and whose frowns meant death, lived far more simply their daily lives. You will wisely observe that there is a quid-pro-quo in the matter,

Palma, Nov. 13, 1886.

MY DEAR E.—In my letter yesterday I remarked that there was no Narbonne station here to administer coffee in the small hours of the night. But neither in this Fonda de Mallorca (Fonda, you are aware, is Spanish for Hotel) nor in any other, is that often possible. The utmost you can make sure of during these "sleeping hours," is a night porter, heavy-eyed and slow of step, who admits you, with a sort of resigned air which seems to follow you reproachfully as you wind your flight up to your room. This last sounds, somehow, suspiciously

and one has to pay for all this display and self indulgence. That is quite true, and travelling has now become a costly pleasure, and sometimes almost a sinful.

But in Palma de Mallorca, one's luxuries are restricted; and, fortunately, there is a corresponding limit to the charges when your bill is presented. As yet we have had no bill, but I write with the "authority of the speaker :" no less a personage than the good and amiable landlord himself, who, on our arrival, volunteered several exchequer items we did not ask for, but were willing to learn.

Here we have no painted ceilings or carpeted floors. Our rooms are tiled or paved; and in spite of a very charming atmosphere, your first sensation on rising in the morning, when your feet come into contact with the cold stone, is decidedly thrilling. I shall never forget my introduction to this emotion; for though you are supposed to have a small bedside carpet or a mat, this, like your slippers, or your match-box, is certain to have mysteriously gone astray during the night.

I am persuaded that my room is haunted. A mouse could not squeak or a pin fall without waking me; I have retired with everything in its place; I have passed an undisturbed night: and yet the next morning I have found my carpet in the further corner of the outer room, looking very much ruffled and demoralised.

Not only must my room be haunted, but these Palma ghosts must have a special affection for bedside carpets. Possibly they were denied these luxuries in life, and are now taking out their revenge. I have asked H. C. whether his experience is the same as mine, but he only stares vacantly; doesn't know whether he has a carpet or not; doesn't care; doesn't see how anyone could care. Of course, a poet must have a soul above carpets.

My room is divided into two compartments, and I make one compartment my bedroom, the other my reception-room. I have held levées since I came here, but they have, happily, been levées of imagination only; peopled with ghosts of the dead-and-gone, and recollections of all the living who make our world. The doors of the rooms are peculiar. They have no handles to them, like the ordinary christian doors of a civilised country. If you are at home, you must lock yourself in; and if any one knocks you must rise and open.

Thus when Francisco comes every morning with hot water, and to generally constitute himself my groom of the chambers, I have to perform the undignified office of getting up to admit him, and hastening back to my couch to escape the dangers of a sudden chill.

He brings up the water in a small tea-kettle with a narrow spout—another Mallorcan peculiarity, so far, at any rate, as this fonda is concerned. It takes quite ten minutes to pour out, by which time the water has cooled down to an agreeable temperature of some ten degrees below freezing point. I one day tried to remove the lid, and pour the hot stream in a small cataract, but the lid refused to come

off. Apparently it was not meant to do so, and I wondered, like George III. with the dumplings, how the water ever got inside. I suppose they have false bottoms to them.

About an hour later, H. C. makes his appearance, and shortly after, Francisco comes in with our first breakfast : a truly conventional meal consisting of coffee and rolls, without butter.

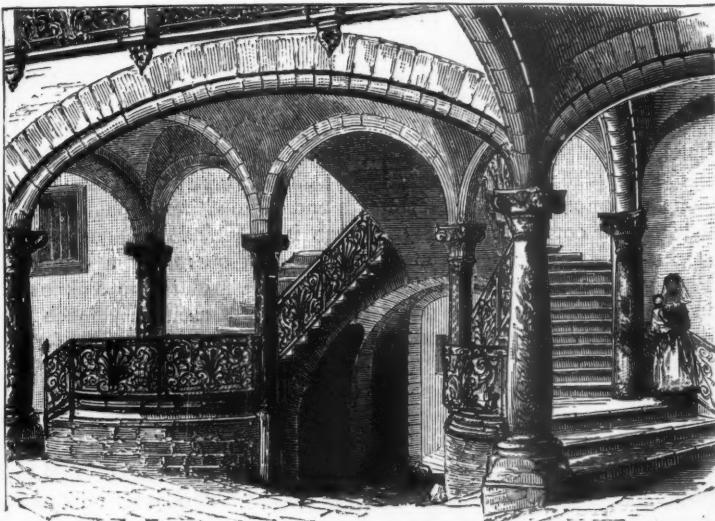
Butter in Majorca seems to be unknown—at least of its own manufacture. The first morning they brought us something which looked like the real thing, and we took it in faith. We have not yet recovered from the fright. We thought they had brought us poison, and hurriedly set about making our wills. If the option were now given me of taking that or the fatal bowl, I would choose the latter, especially if administered at the hands of a fair Rosamund. *She*, I am aware, was the victim in days gone by, but I would permit her now to have her revenge. This butter that they eat, is brought over from Spain. To describe it as rancid is not to give you the faintest idea of its horrors.

We fell back upon dry bread, to which I am still devoted ; but H. C. has purchased unto himself sundry pots of jam, which, like Mr. Gladstone, he seems to think "an excellent substitute for butter." He is fast creating a dearth in Palma of this luxurious article of food. But do not imagine that it is like our English jams. It is a sort of jelly, soft and sickly, like French confiture, reminding one of nothing so much as the days of gray powders and childish convalescences. Like the late Lord Derby, who preferred the gout to a certain prescribed wine—I prefer my bread dry.

They also bring us—it is a universal custom in Majorca—each a small round cake, or bun, of pastry, very pleasant and agreeable. It is made with olive oil, and is so light that you might almost blow it away. We are not wise or we should leave it to the last, but we invariably begin upon it first. I would restrain my ardour, but H. C. is impatient, and I know that if mine were in existence when his has departed this life, I should stand small chance of my share of the good things of a Mallorcan breakfast. The weak, you know, always go to the wall. The first morning we both declined this delicacy ; but have since "acquired" the taste which generally comes with perseverance. *Le goût, comme l'appétit, vient en mangeant.*

The first two mornings we thought to spare the waiter trouble, and went down to this first breakfast ; but the room was each time in possession of two or three Spaniards outsmoking each other with a tobacco which was not to our fastidious liking. It was too much for our sensitive nerves. We gave up philanthropy and the breakfast-room, and are much more at ease in our little sitting-room. It is humbly furnished, but it is all our own. A few wooden chairs, a deal table covered with oil-cloth, a chest of drawers in one corner, vacuum in the other three corners—these are our household goods in Palma de Mallorca, and we are more than content.

Our windows face the East and are immediately opposite the Palma Club, where the *jeunesse dorée*, alike with those whose sun is declining, most do congregate for billiards, smoking, lounging and gossip. Whether the latter ever degenerates to scandal, is more than I can at present tell you. It is said that human nature in its broad outlines is the same all the world over. If this be true—and I have no reason to doubt it, and have no arguments at hand to disprove it—then scandal cannot be unknown to Palma. But for the large upper windows the building might be taken for a convent; from the outside, of course; for within it does not in the least resemble a community of nuns.



A PALMA COURT.

I will not enter into a description of the games at billiards, small tables, absence of pockets, mode of playing, &c. &c. This would be so much Greek to you, who have the good taste not to join other ladies when visiting their brothers' billiard-rooms.

To us to watch the players sometimes affords half an hour's idle amusement, as we also lounge and smoke from our windows, whence we overlook this little world. H. C. is strong in the matter of billiards, and tries to raise in me an enthusiasm I pretend to feel—and do not. He gives me fifty, and I allow him to win. This keeps him in excellent temper, which is everything, whilst to lose a game at billiards is to me a mere bagatelle. I would not say as much of chess. There I have the advantage. I give him a queen and a rook, and beat easily.

At half past eleven comes the second breakfast, in this Fonda de Mallorca, for which we go down to the dining-room. But our nerves by this time have gained tone, and we are able to support, however much we may dislike, our food flavoured with tobacco smoke.

To say the truth, it is not very general or overpowering. One or two men come in with lighted cigarettes, but they put them down when more substantial matter is given them to digest. Both at lunch and dinner, however, they do not scruple to return to the evil of their ways at the end of their banquet, no matter what stage your own may have reached.

We live here better than we anticipated. We had heard that hotels in Palma were all bad ; that civilisation was very far behind the age ; that one had to rough it to a very great extent ; that food was insufficient, not good, badly dressed and uncomfortably served. As far as Palma is concerned, and the Fonda de Mallorca, this may, to a great extent, be contradicted.

It cannot be denied that if Palma had a large and well organised hotel, appointed more like the hotels one is generally accustomed to —the pampered luxury, in short, to which I have just taken exception —its attractions would be increased, and more visitors would lighten it with their countenance. But though it is behind the age in this respect, it has made great strides in the last quarter of a century. Fifty years ago such a thing as an inn was said to be unknown in Majorca, and a visitor going there, found himself very much of a sojourner in a strange land, at the peril of dying for want of the common necessities of life.

This state of things has passed away, giving place to one which is not only tolerable, but to be enjoyed by all who are of a reasonable turn of mind.

Our second breakfast generally begins with an omelette, dressed to perfection. If Majorca fails in cows and in supplies of milk and butter, fowls must certainly be abundant and excellent. The supply of eggs never fails, and there are many ways of serving them. Two substantial dishes follow the omelette, and not infrequently one of them is pork.

On these occasions I am deprived of a part of my sustenance, whilst H. C., on the contrary, counts them as feast days, to be marked with a red letter. So gross a taste in a refined poet is a little surprising, but human nature, like the physical world, is given to contradictions. We have known a warm Christmas, and we have seen snow in harvest. In all matters concerning pork, I am as revolted as if I had been born a Hebrew of the Hebrews ; and if I dared make a jeu-de-mot—a habit to be held in abomination—I would say that the only hog's-head I appreciate is that which contains pure Bordeaux wine.

No wonder that pork is frequently served in Palma, for I am told that pigs are one of the staple commodities of the island : one of

their great branches of industry, chief sources of trade, principal objects of exportation.

"This accounts for the Barcelona sausages one hears so much about," said a lady who had given me this information before leaving England; and I stood convicted; for though familiar with Barcelona nuts, I had never heard of its sausages.

In a moment, however, it occurred to me that the dear creature was confused in her geography and had substituted Barcelona for Bologna. It was a slight variation, but this was of no consequence. The difference of a few hundred or a few thousand miles is a very trifling matter to the feminine temperament, whose world is made up of feeling and sentiment, whilst mere accuracy in detail or description goes for nothing. I could write pages upon the inconsistency of the female mind, but I spare you the infliction. Not that it would tell home to one (I do not wish to pay you a compliment) who is a signal exception to the generality of her sex.

And how quickly the feminine brain jumps to conclusions, right or wrong, leading to all sorts of complications, cross questions and crooked answers. Do you remember the very week before leaving England for Majorca, I had the honour of making one at your dinner table? Miss R. happened to remark that her brother, a Commander in the Royal Navy was some time ago in Calcutta, having gone out in one of the P. and O. boats, in charge of the mails. It was the custom in those days. "I suppose," said your very intimate friend, Miss A. H., from across the table, with a great air of innocence: "I suppose that is what is meant by a *Post Captain*?" Yet Miss A. H., whose life is passed amongst military, if not naval, men, ought to have known better.

Does this show the poverty of our language? Or prove the inconsistency of the female mind in jumping to conclusions by means of instinct, not reason? Or only betray a vivid imagination on the part of Miss A. H.? Perhaps something of all three. Many effects may spring from the same cause, just as the evil deeds of a sire are often felt to the third and fourth generation.

Let us finish up our subject of the Majorcan pigs.

Over here, I am told they are the finest in the world. They are well looked after, well housed, well fed. They wander about the woods and tracts of country, and find unlimited supplies. Whether they take observations and enlarge their minds, I know not, but they gather up food and greatly add to their bodily dimensions. Like the aldermen of the famous City of London, they might write upon their backs: "Widened at the expense of the Public." They are black as beavers—the pigs, not the aldermen—and of immense size. The animal is as precious to the Majorcan as to the Irishman. But what a difference in the races—not the animal race but the human. The swine-herds—they who have the care of the pigs—are by no means attractive, though some of them are said to be often rich and

flourishing—for Majorcans. One came into the dining-room only this morning, of whom I will presently give you a benefit.

But many of the owners of these animals are gentle, kindly, and easy to be entreated. They make an occupation, not a companion, of their protégés. When the time for exportation comes, these are so fat that, once down, it is difficult to get them up again. The herds in charge go about the vessel on its voyage from Palma to Barcelona, and poke and prod and stir up the unfortunate animals with a long wand or pole. They are not allowed to lie down or they might die, but must remain, as far as possible, upright on their legs; carrying as best they can in the rolling vessel, the weight of their bodies and the consequences of their greediness. Does remorse ever overtake them on such occasions? I don't know whether pigs, any more than many human beings, have consciences.

The decks, I hear, are crowded. Pigs here, pigs there, pigs everywhere. Pigs, in short, are everything, passengers nothing. The noise throughout the night is to be imagined, not described. If this be true, then shall we have a benefit on our return to Barcelona, when that time comes. Then must the Majorcans look to their ways, and not expect their beautiful island to be visited and appreciated until the reign of a better order of things has set in.

For it is undoubtedly a beautiful island, with much to attract and allure. Hills and valleys; the richest and most productive vegetation; orange groves and oliveyards and vineyards; the refined and refreshing pomegranate in abundance, the green fig in profusion, the prickly pear and the exquisite fruit of the wild arbutus. It has the loveliest shores, the grandest of cliffs, bluest of seas; that everchanging and mysterious main, its expanse a foreshadowing of eternity, its stormy moods a type of our own life, the uncertainty of the fate awaiting those who launch forth upon its waters, an emblem of death. The Mediterranean is beautiful everywhere, but it is especially so in Majorca.

As yet we have only seen it from Palma. Hills and valleys and orange-scented groves, cliffs and caverns: all these for us have yet to come. But I accept in faith what I have heard, and what I hope future letters may confirm.

One item I can at once bear witness to—the beauty and abundance of their grapes and apples. These form part of our daily dessert at breakfast and dinner. The grapes are the most delicious in existence. In the market place for the sum of one penny you can burden yourself with a rich feast of them. At table the supply is unlimited. If you take half-a-dozen bunches, one after another, no surprise is felt, no one is shocked—except you who take them. At the third bunch you begin to feel guilty, at the sixth your cheek is suffused with the blush of shame.

They are unlike other grapes. Their yellow skins are exceedingly thin, and they contain the sweetest, most refreshing, most whole-

some liquid. They are all liquid. A bunch disappears and you feel that you have taken a cooling draught, but no digestible substance. The supply might go on for ever—or at any rate as long as you are at table, and still, from their peculiar nature, you would not be satiated. Like the Irishman to whom claret was given when he had been used to whisky, you might drink the sea dry of them and seem "no forwarder."

So with the apples, though here you have substance, not liquid, and desire and quantity are limited. They are the most delicious in the world. Small red and white fruit with delicate red veins running about their surfaces, faintly pencilled as the rivers on a map. They bear a refined flavour, more like a nectarine than anything else, and properly prepared and fermented, would surely yield nectar for the gods. Mortals may be grateful for them in their natural condition.

These fruits form the concluding and by no means most indifferent portion of our meals.

Punctuality is not at all an item to be observed on these occasions. Breakfast is supposed to be at half past eleven, dinner at half past six. The usual thing is for the table to begin to fill an hour after the appointed time. It is useless to attempt to sit down before twelve and seven o'clock, and even then your own meal is half over when others are beginning theirs. This is enough to drive the best cook in the world stark staring mad. In the case of the worst, of course it would not matter ; the result would be the same—all equally bad.

But at the Fonda de Mallorca, if the cook is not a Francatelli or a Soyer, he is far from being an ill master of his art. (Has it not been decided by an incontrovertible council headed by Sir Henry Thompson that cooking is one of the Fine Arts?) He is especially good in his *entremets*, which require skill and punctuality, and I often wonder how he manages, at the interval of an hour to send them up apparently still perfect. Possibly he prepares them in relays ; just as a battalion of soldiers in a war, will come up to the front and take the place of those who have gone before.

This dinner hour is our Palma purgatory : or at least it is mine. H. C. rather likes the study of human nature it affords him, though I defy him—or even Shakespeare—to leave the room with a single poetical idea in his brain.

Dinner itself is very much like lunch on an extended scale. We begin with soup, the one bad thing here, which I discreetly pass. Fish comes round after the third or fourth course. This hardly accords with one's habits and wishes ; mais à Rome, &c., &c. One can put up with and even grow used to everything of this sort ; but the company at table and the inferno that rages long before dinner is over : this, on the contrary, grows daily more intolerable.

The greater portion of the guests are people who visit these islands on business, who know each other, fraternize, have tastes and habits

in common. They are most of them Spaniards, excitable, easily roused, impetuous. In their calm moments, you would think them about to murder each other, and you look for the flash of steel, and the smoke of fire; and you think of the horrible fate of the Kilkenny cats; but when roused and heated and angry—oh then, le déluge: and the colour would surely be crimson?

It has never yet reached this climax; but our stay here is only beginning—who knows what may happen before the end? A general fray, perhaps; a vendetta; in which innocent and guilty will alike suffer, and your correspondent will all at once cease to torment you: and there will come a sudden pause, a blank, a great calm, both to you and to us.

Up to the present hour we have experienced only the amiable stage. There has been no flash of steel, no smoke of fire, no red deluge. The inferno begins when dinner has well advanced, and the excellent wine, gratuitously supplied in large white glass decanters, has been freely consumed. By this time you would say war to knife was going on. The noise is uproarious, deafening, confusing, bewildering. They all appear to be contradicting each other, but though I understand little of what is said, I believe it is only ordinary conversation. Yet every now and then, one flashes up unmistakeably, leans forward, shouts at his adversary, glares, seems on the very point of proceeding to extremities. Then a gradual subsidence, and bloodshed is once more averted.

One man continually uses and spreads out his hands, as if he were laying down the law or preaching a sermon. He is quite as emphatic as the others, but not quite so loud; yet, if anything, more irritating. Of their manners in general it is perhaps as well to say nothing. Only those who, like H. C., are blessed with unsusceptible nerves and iron muscles, can stand these things with equanimity. Of course, if an English lady were present, she could *not* be present—if you can understand this Irishism.

This goes on day after day. We are a small party of four Englishmen, at our end of the table; for singularly enough two English gentlemen crossed over with us from Barcelona, and our lines have since run very much in the same direction.

"It never rains, but it pours," is an old and vulgar saying; and whereas Englishmen very rarely visit this Island of Majorca even in solos, a quartette must needs cross over in the same vessel.

To one of them, Majorca is a familiar friend, and it says something for the island that he is again visiting it for an indefinite period. Of course he may have special attractions to bring him here. On a previous sojourn, the dark flashing eyes of some beautiful houri, or the pensive sapphire orbs, blue as the Mediterranean, of some fair Madonna, may have taken his fancy captive. These influences are irresistible as the fatal basilisk—draw as inevitably as the pole draws the needle. Of this I know nothing, and I have not been

indiscreet enough to enquire. But I think I may add, without indiscretion, that he will find it difficult to match his own eyes, for they are two of the brightest and most beautiful I ever saw.

An invasion of four Englishmen must have astonished our good landlord, and he no doubt felt that the golden age had risen at last, and Palma was about to become the fashion. Before that day dawns ; if ever Palma is frequented by the English even in small numbers ; he will find it necessary to reorganise his establishment, build himself another dining-room, and separate the two nations on those very important occasions which to so many form the great object of existence.

Only this morning at breakfast, one of these swine-herds (or pig-farmers, if the word may be used) came in. I had never seen one before, and was not edified. On second thoughts—for you would not like it—I will spare you any description, and merely mention that, according to the custom of his clan, his head was tied up tightly in a cotton handkerchief, knot and ends behind. If they only tied them in front, starched the ends and stuck them out like a horn on each side, the likeness would be perfect.

I had never come across such a specimen, much less sat at the same table with him. His presence filled the room. Luckily, H. C. and three empty chairs were between him and the "wind of my nobility," or I must have retired.

H. C. looked at him steadily for some time, and then turned to me.

"Another most interesting production," he observed. "I delight in him. The contemplation of this object gives me the greatest satisfaction. Indeed the whole company in general affords me the most supreme pleasure."

No doubt this was said partly to irritate me. It succeeded. I had just finished my sixth bunch of grapes, and rose. H. C. had only begun upon his first, and he had also half a dish of olives to get through—things I detest, but for which he would sacrifice his conscience.

"Then pray take your supreme pleasure to the full," I answered. "I leave you to its enjoyment. In my own room, it will be a case of Nunquam solus, quam minus cum solus : a trite proverb, but a compliment one cannot pay you down here."

Five minutes later he appeared, pale and agitated.

"What's the matter," I asked. "Have you seen a ghost ?"

"After you left the dining-room," he gasped, "another specimen appeared on the scene. He was too much even for me —"

"He must indeed have been bad !" I interrupted.

"You cannot have an idea *how* bad," murmured H. C., faintly. "Might I ask you for a little eau-de-cologne and a tumbler of French brandy."

"Certainly," I replied, rising with the occasion to the height of a

ministering spirit. "And presently you shall have some tea. You look very bad, too; very bad indeed—but in a different way."

For we make our own tea in our own sitting-room, quite openly, and with the full knowledge and approbation of our hosts. We tried theirs the first two days and then gave it up in despair. Coffee here is excellent, but they persisted in making the tea with greasy water, with a result not to be described. It was like nothing I ever heard of above the earth or on the earth—I do not wish to know anything of what goes on under the earth. It is certain that only extreme thirst could dispose of this singular decoction.

"Necessity is the mother of invention"—a saying you must have heard before. I do not think it belongs to Shakespeare, but it is worthy of him, so much human nature does it contain. On our third morning we sallied forth for a tea-making apparatus, ransacked the town, and at last found the exact thing. Perseverance surmounts obstacles. You see that I am philosophical to-night, and have not forgotten my copybook days. We returned in triumph with a lamp, a teapot, and a supply of spirits-of-wine beautifully disguised in a large eau-de-cologne bottle for the sake of respectability.

When Francisco saw the whole contrivance set up and flaming, he was delighted; when the water boiled and poured out tea, he was amazed. The very small cups not being to our liking, he sent off a special messenger to an adjoining china shop for two bowls without handles and with impromptu saucers, and these he brings up to us nightly. We are much gratified.

And I think we have never enjoyed tea so much as now, when we make it somewhat under difficulties and make it ourselves. Cooks, they say, never enjoy their own dinners, but I am sure they must draw the line at their own tea. Of course H. C. has written a poem upon the subject, beginning :

"The greatest bliss, beloved, in Paradise will be,
To roam those fields Elysian and sip Bohea."

And he scarcely ever raises the cup to his lips without adding, as he puts it down : "Grateful and comforting." I tell him this remark is not original, and therefore unworthy of him, but he says they are the most appropriate words he can think of.

It is very necessary here to be in favour with the domestics—and we are happily popular with this fastidious class. They are very independent, and if you offend them, you will probably suffer in consequence.

Our hosts are very civil and obliging, but we have never seen them on this floor since we entered the doors of the Fonda; except on the morning of our arrival, when the landlord politely conducted us to our rooms. Thus left to themselves, the servants follow their own lead.

They are all men. Francisco is an Italian, and an exception to

the general rule. You may order him about as much as you please, and it delights him to do your bidding. Antonio, our little chamberlain, wants no small persuasion to do his work in decent time. We ask him with the greatest courtesy to be good enough to put our habitation in order, and by that means we gradually, very gradually, get swept and garnished. Otherwise, we should be able, on Saturday night, to write down the catalogue of our week's sins in the dust which had been accumulating since Monday morning. They do just as they please, what they please, and when they please.

But I have no sort of fault to find with them, for to us they have been very obliging. Antonio, our little chamberlain, is extremely ugly, therefore you will not be surprised to hear that his ruling passion is vanity. By judiciously administering to this weakness, we get on extremely well; and like those cages that go about the streets of London, containing birds, beasts and fishes, all mixed up together and presided over by a depressed cat, we are a very happy family.

If we want him, we merely go outside and clap our hands, as if we were applauding a popular actor. There are bells in the hotel, but everywhere this clapping of hands is the more general signal of distress or need. We have often rung our bell six times, and at the sixth pull it has brought itself down, but it has failed to bring anyone up. But a hand-clapping receives immediate attention. By this we know that we are popular: for some of these noisy Spaniards may clap by the hour and shout themselves husky; no one comes. If they were to beat their breast and tear their hair, I don't think they would come any the more.

This vain little chamberlain is especially proud of his voice. In our presence he restrains himself, but in rooms near at hand and in passages he gives vent to the strange power of his lungs.

His music is weird, extraordinary, indescribable. It is utterly impossible to endeavour to make out a melody. It possesses none. It is the wild music of the island. To me it is more than unpleasant. It fills me with a sort of nameless, mysterious horror. If there can be madness in music, it is here. The very street children catch up the singular sounds, which occasionally border upon howling. But I, to whom music is second nature, cannot in the least reproduce them, or acquire them, or write them down. I am baffled, defeated; but I cannot say that I feel disgraced.

This music, like nothing earthly I ever heard, must, I think, be a tradition handed down to them from the Moors, altered and disfigured in character through the filtering process of long centuries. For it is six hundred years and upwards since the reign of the Moor ceased in Majorca.

Our chamberlain makes rooms and passages re-echo with this wild production, delivered with stentorian energy. At the end of each verse he comes in with some excuse to mark the effect upon us. Woe

be unto us if we did not look beatified. In truth we are in ecstasies, quite as much as the mystics of old, but they are ecstasies of misery. Very opposite causes will produce apparently similar results ; and I have heard that whether you burn, or whether you freeze, the sensation is the same. So Antonio applies a flattering but very mistaken unction to his soul.

We escape upwards sometimes from this noise to the roof of the hotel. It is perhaps midday and the sun is glowing with a brilliancy you would pay for in gold in an English November. The sky, of the most liquid blue, finds its reflection upon those fair waters of the Levant. We are surrounded by white, Eastern looking houses. Above them the wonderful Cathedral rears its amber head ; and from this point we have the benefit of its beautiful tower.

Below it, is the old Moorish Palace, though with very few Moorish traces left about it. Encircling all are the undulating hills, cutting the clear background of the sky in long wavy outlines. On a lower ridge stands the ancient Castle of Bellver, overlooking the sea. The view is warm, sunny, Eastern ; very much of a dream. It might be the dream of a lotus-eater, so singular is its effect upon the brain. Beside us a cage, large as a room, holds a number of pigeons. We go up to them, and find them tame and approachable. Indeed, they come to us and in their own language plainly ask to be let out : a liberty we have no intention of taking. They would like to soar above all this world, into that liquid blue ether. So should we ; but they must not at our bidding ; and we cannot at any one's bidding. We would often fly if we could ; and probably much of what we came upon unexpectedly would make us the most wretched beings in existence. Some people are always dreaming of flying ; but surely these, whether sleeping or waking, must be naturally light-headed ? I never dreamed of flying in my life, and leave you to draw the evident deduction.

On this roof we often sit for half an hour at a time, indulging in our elevation above the world. Antonio's voice comes with a delightfully far-off effect, like the whisper of a giant. He thinks us in our room, and if all this is meant for our edification, he is wasting his sweetness on the desert air. But probably he is driving some other unhappy mortal to the verge of madness.

Let us descend to the ordinary level of mankind. Walk with me down the street we have just been overlooking from the house-top. It is one of the least interesting of the Palma thoroughfares, but it leads to those steps of which I enclosed you a sketch in my last letter : conducts to a small triangular garden, where tropical plants flourish and spread their beautiful fronds and branches : ends at the port and harbour, which is always busy, always has life and movement about it ; always discloses that wonderful sapphire sea beyond.

Turn to the right, and you quickly reach the Lonja. Next to

the Cathedral, this is certainly the most remarkable building in Palma.

It is large, square, gothic, dating from the first half of the 15th century. The exterior is not very remarkable, though relieved at each corner by octagonal towers with indented battlements, whilst from tower to tower runs an openwork indented gallery of great beauty. In the centre of each gallery rises a small turret. The gothic doorway is also large and remarkable; and of the huge angel above it, I like everything except the head.

It is the interior of the Lonja which I would bring before you, consisting of a single square chamber of great size and height. The arched roof is supported by fluted pillars, the most slender and graceful imaginable. From these spring the mouldings which gradually form the arches, and spread upwards and outwards like a palm tree. But whilst these exquisite stone representations have remained, the palm trees for which Palma was once famous have nearly all disappeared.

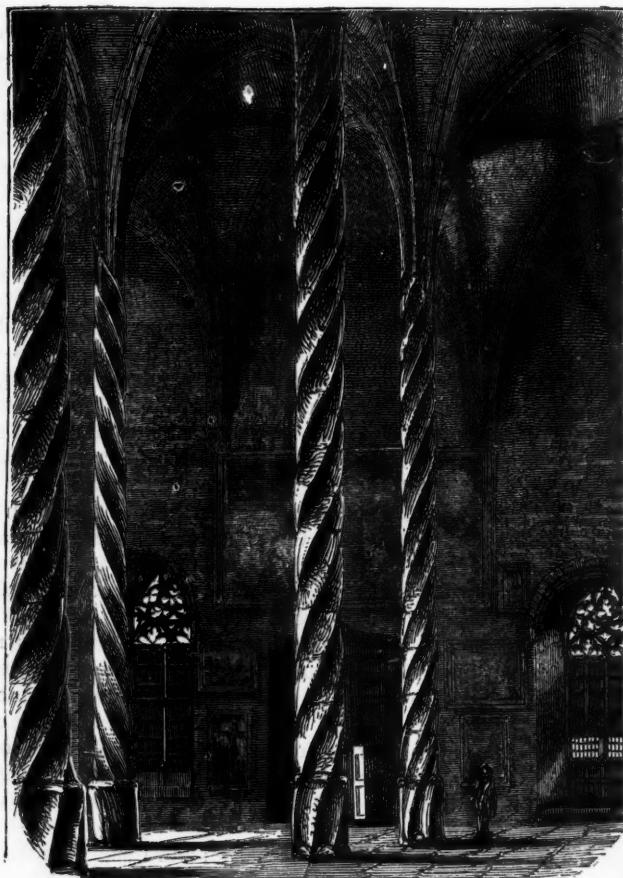
The place is now empty and disused. At the present moment it is in the hands of restorers and workmen. The large windows are shuttered, but the gothic tracery above the shutters, admitting a gloomy religious light, is of the most refined beauty. The sky seen through them is liquid, blue and ethereal. Lights and shadows play about the roof, throwing out the pillars in relief, or veiling them in half obscurity.

For years, I am told, it has been used as a ball-room, and for public meetings; and lighted up, the effect must be singular and charming. The pictures, usually hanging on the walls, are to-day on the ground. The place looks dismantled. Workmen are chipping stone and planing wood. The marble floor on which we walk is earthy, the atmosphere we breathe is tomb-like. All this does not matter. It cannot blind one to beauty and refinement in architecture. The Lonja is the exact opposite to the Cathedral, for whilst that is severe almost to nudity, this has great beauty of detail. I can quite understand many tastes preferring the Lonja to the great church. But comparisons, after all, are idle, very often misplaced, nearly always invidious. All people and things cannot be alike—Heaven forbid; each should be judged alone.

This building was intended for an exchange: and I suppose fulfilled its destiny for many an age. But one asks involuntarily what sort of men they were who transacted business amidst these columns, under this vaulted roof, and what effect it had upon their lives and their work. Surely they must have been of finer mould, nobler in mind, more upright in dealing than those who went through sale and barter within prosier walls? A thing of beauty is a joy for ever, and in constant presence of the beautiful, we impressionable beings may soar superior to the dead level of everyday life. For the tendency of time and existence, experience and contemplation, mixing with one's fellow

men and weighing them in the balance, is I fear, seldom in favour of making us rise "on stepping stones of our dead selves to higher things."

These Palma merchants in their beautiful Lonja, were very much

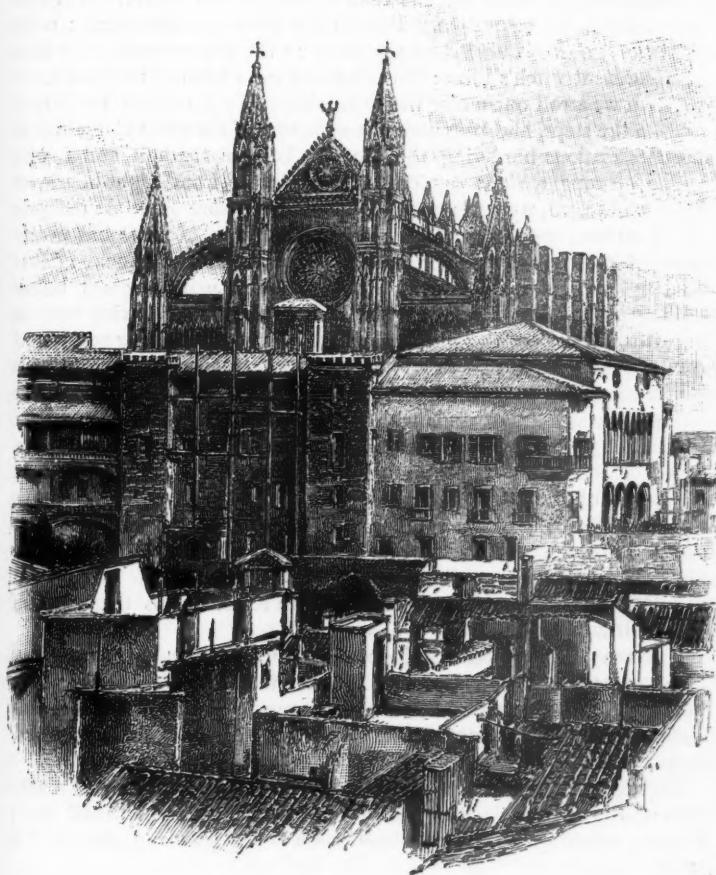


THE LONJA.

to be envied in those past days. They have left behind them a tradition and an atmosphere. One peoples the great square hall with their dead-and-gone shades, but it is impossible to make of them anything prosy or austere, or invest them with the hard, unromantic front and bearing of ordinary business mortals.

We mount one of the towers of the Lonja, and reach the battle-

mented roof. The view is more remarkable, more striking than from the hotel. We are nearer the everchanging, sapphire sea, and hear its ceaseless splash upon the shore: a sleepy sound suggestive of the Mallorcan temperament. The harbour is at our feet, all its craft



VIEW FROM ROOF OF THE LONJA

dancing upon the flashing water. Below us are innumerable houses, with white walls, balconies, arcades and red-tiled roofs. Beyond them, the wonderfully picturesque old Moorish Palace raises its head proudly. It is very ancient, is irregularly built, and what it has of Moorish perhaps is best seen from here. Its arcades and gallery facing the sea are very characteristic.

Above and beyond this towers the Cathedral, its amber tone standing out in strong contrast with everything around it, an object of infinite grandeur. H. C. has sketched it from this point of view, and I enclose you the result.

But it is amazingly hot up here. We seem to have got ever so many thousand miles nearer the sun than we were down below. Yet that sun is beginning to decline. Presently it sinks and disappears ; night follows. So does our Palma purgatory in the dining-room. So does our excellent witch's brew : the cup that cheers but not inebrates.

Then we stroll out under the night sky. We go down the street, and up the steps, and pass under the shadow of the great Cathedral to the fortifications bordering the sea. It is intensely dark, and I, who with so strong a sight by day have suffered from night-blindness from childhood upwards, can see nothing before me. It delights H. C. to lead me astray : for I am at his mercy. Now he has nearly plunged me over a precipice, and now I have almost knocked down a sentry, muffled up in a cloak as if it were so many degrees below freezing point. I apologize, and he excuses himself for having been in my path. These are delightful manners. From his bearing you would think he considered that in attempting to knock him down I had paid him a compliment or done him great honour. H. C. is amused in quite a boyish way, expands with suppressed laughter (I cannot for the life of me see anything funny in the situation), and suggests in a sort of Job's-comfortor-tone that before long I shall find myself in the hands of the Inquisitorial Council.

The night is glorious ; the ramparts are deserted ; we and the sentry have the whole extent to ourselves. Stars flash and blaze. One has no conception of such a firmament in England. But I need not describe it to you, who have seen it in softer climes than that of Great Britain.

The sea is stretched out before us, invisible, yet ever sounding. Here and there, a light upon its bosom shows some fishing craft at work. That poor wreck is within a few yards of us. We feel its influence though we cannot see it. Never again will it show port and starboard lights, or answer to its helm.

Beside us the great Cathedral is outlined, darker than the darkness of the night ; looking many times larger than in broad day ; a black, overwhelming, mysterious mass. We gaze and gaze until a creepy feeling takes hold of us. We feel molecules beside it ; atoms under all this expanse of sea and sky and starry world and eternity of space. It gives one a breathless, bewildered, *lost* sensation. Whither does the soul, when summoned, wing its flight ?

Below us an incline leading to mysterious archways admits one into the narrow streets of the town ; streets peopled with the shades of many of the dead-and-gone nobility of Palma. Nothing else haunts them to-night, except here and there a flitting figure : a woman hurrying home, it may be, to complete the simple annals of

her daily life : or a cavalier, cloaked and muffled, shivering with what he considers a freezing atmosphere, and we a balmy, beautiful air.

If we wait long enough, we shall assuredly hear the old watchman with his melancholy cry, see the gleam of his lantern mysteriously flashing about the archway, into which he ventures for a moment, and then turns back again. As I have already said, he reminds one of many things : and hearing him I seem to hear again Mendelssohn's grand setting to the words : "Sleepers wake ! a voice is calling : it is the watchman on the walls."

But here, it is we who are on the walls ; the watchman is down below ; and he recedes, and his voice dies away. And the night goes back to that intense quiet which gives one a feeling of such profound loneliness. You seem face to face with death and eternity : you realise the fathomless mystery, the awful certainty of both. To some, a savour of life unto life : and to others—what ?

All this we went through to-night ; for more often than not, these fortifications are our evening stroll. Everything about it has the strange fascination of utter stillness and solitude, of great surroundings and grand outlines, the wide sweep of a wonderful sky. As for the town itself, it puts up its shutters, and metaphorically or actually goes to bed very early. The dark streets and closed houses are depressing and melancholy. We prefer the silent ramparts.

Then we come in, and H. C., after sitting for half an hour like a graven image or a deaf-mute, suddenly glows with the light of inspiration, pens a Couplet to Capella, or an Ode to Orion, inflicts his composition upon me, and then magnanimously retires to solitude and slumber. I am left alone ; but it is not the most unpleasant hour of my day—or night—that in which I hold uninterrupted converse with you, and let my pen take its wandering course.

And, as I live—there again, is the old watchman, cloaked, lantered, heavy-shod, heavy-limbed, announcing the small hours. And there is the dawn in the East, and I must hasten away like a ghost at cock-crow.

Benediction rest upon you : and on the thrice sacred head who makes our sunshine in this world, and has unfailingly pointed the way to the next.



AMONG UNTRODDEN WAYS.

IN central France the explorer may still find such solitudes that the footsteps of a stranger awaken a kind of panic in the life of hills and woods.

Visiting the streams of the upper Loire a few years ago on a holiday trip, I had travelled for some hours since leaving the last beaten track, leading my bicycle when the ground undulated too much. Hot and tired, I hailed with no little pleasure the inviting shade of a deep valley. I had come upon it suddenly and unexpectedly, so hidden away was it in that sea of hills.

As I descended into its cool shade, leaving my bicycle above, the rabbits stood perfectly still and looked at me: the birds hesitated long enough for me to have caught them before they understood that flight was necessary.

It was a delicious spot, an ideal Eden, and it was spring-time; and I, in my spring, fairly revelled in the scent of the hyacinths and the lily of the valley, and the starry primroses on the soft green banks spread like a golden carpet mingling their own subtle perfume with that of the hyacinths and lilies. What a contrast it all was to the smoky town I had escaped from for a brief holiday, and the grim office of the lawyer, for whom I had the privilege of copying deeds.

I was seized with a mad desire to build myself a hut in this dale and quietly retire beyond human ken and following, to dream the dreams that were plentiful enough in me at that time, without any musty parchment to bring me down from the clouds, or a green-baize door to shut me in with the stern matter-of-fact of the law. This idea came as a suggestion merely, to smile over, but it took greater possession of me at each moment as I wandered on down, down into the dale.

There was a merry little stream at the bottom curveting over a shallow sand-bank, and losing itself among the trees at a turn of the valley. How cool and sparkling it was. I was about to remove my boots and stockings and behave like a child at the sea-side, when my eyes suddenly fell upon a mound which seemed to be artificial. It was shaped like a grave, and was on the opposite side of the stream. I walked through the water, boots and all. I was always curious, and a trifle impatient.

A moment brought me to it, and I felt much as Robinson Crusoe must have done when he came upon the footprint on the sand. Upon this mound, which I could no longer doubt was a grave, lay a wreath of fresh-gathered flowers. I stared at them till the blue of the hyacinth blended with the gold of the primrose and produced a prismatic effect. I closed my eyes and looked again. There could

be no doubt of it. There was the wreath; so fresh and dewy, it could not have been placed there many hours. It was woven with grasses upon a willow stem. I would have touched it, but it seemed profanation; and as I stood there the wooded hills on either hand echoed such bird song as I had never dreamed of. I felt as if I had come into an enchanted land, and longed, yet feared to awake from my delusion.

My delusion deepened upon me; for now, amid the shrill music of the myriad birds, I heard a joyous human soprano rising and falling in an exquisite song that harmonised with the laughter of the stream, the gentle music of the rustling leaves and the bird chorus.

My delusion deepened still further, for now I seemed to see my bicycle descending the valley, with my valise strapped to it, and the glinting sunlight striking on it brightly now and then. But as I gazed in a sort of stupefaction, my delusion reached its climax. That bicycle was being led by what must have been the nymph of these woods, to whom the soprano voice seemed to belong. She was dressed in green, which accounted for my not seeing her sooner, so did her robe blend with the nature-tints about her.

The words of the song reached me now. They were in French. It was no delusion, then, but a reality. Victor Hugo's poem, "Le Papillon et la Fleur," had never so touched me as when sung by this fresh young voice.

Whether I connected that gay creature with the grave by which I was standing or not I cannot tell. A feeling of awe, akin to the supernatural, had possession of me. Had I known that the earth was going to open, I should still have stood by that grave watching her.

Softly and lightly she trod the valley, her twinkling white feet seeming scarcely to bend the blades of grass. And between the wild snatches of her song, she laughed a laugh which the silver stream must have taught her, and stopped to touch my bicycle here and there, as a child might some new toy. Finally, she laid it against a bank, and throwing herself at full length upon the soft turf, she gazed at it, and burst into song once more. And all this time I stood beside the grave with the fresh wreath upon it, drinking in this vision of beauty.

She could not be more than sixteen, and her short dress made her look even younger. How soft and mellow was the brown of her hair which streamed on the turf and over her bare arms. Hair so cared for, so well-kept in this solitary place, that it seemed to me there must yet be another here. And how exquisitely white and pink were the little feet in the shadows. The bodice of her simple dress was a kind of pelerine crossed upon her breast and knotted behind, and round her white throat she wore a string of coral beads.

I had time to note all this before she rose from the grass and began to experiment with her new toy. She had evidently no idea of its

use, for at length with a gesture of impatience she turned from it, and her eyes fell upon me.

There could be no reason in it, but I felt like a criminal. What right had I to be watching her so without her knowledge? She had held me spell-bound; she also released me. For, with a cry of terror, much like some animal might give who has seen his comrade struck down by a gun and knows it is pointed at him, she flung her white arms into the air, and fell violently forward.

I rushed through the stream, when she had thus restored my power of motion, and was instantly at her side raising her, and chafing the little hands, which I now saw were tanned and freckled, but of exquisite form and mould. But the face! Had ever wood-nymph such a face? Who and what could she be? The proud upper-lip spoke of a long and noble line of ancestors? The lines of her face, the poise of her head upon those graceful shoulders, all spoke her of noble descent. Yet this strange garb, what could could it mean?

The eyes remained closed. I ran to the stream and filled my hat with water, with which I sprinkled her face. She had sung in French; I now addressed her in that language.

She first smiled, and then opened her eyes. Oh, those eyes, to be thus looked into at so small a distance and in such a lonely spot—soft, velvety, melting brown. But as the sweet eyes revealed themselves, the smile died, and a look of proud enquiry took its place, and she asked me how I came to be there, as a princess might rebuke an unbidden intruder on the royal presence.

I explained, as well as I could, that I was wandering about the country on my bicycle, leading a gipsy life for the sake of variety, nearing the towns or villages only when my provisions failed, and I had come quite by chance upon this lovely valley.

She raised herself and leaned upon the bank, looking at me critically. Then her ripe lips smiled and a sunny ripple overspread her features, and she spoke.

"Are you a prince?" she said in French. "In my book princes come so to find their princesses. I feared mine would never come. You must be my prince, and are come to marry me—isn't it so?"

I had but one sense alive as this exquisite creature spoke: it was silent admiration. She waited for no reply; but, pointing to my bicycle, said: "Is that magic?" And then leaning forward to look at me more closely, her rich smile inundating me with a wild joy I had never known till then, she added: "But, mon prince, you must not take me to the great world till my father shall return, and, alas, he is very long."

"What need of going to the great world at all, my princess?" I cried, taking one of the little hands, and feeling my pulses beat in a wild transport at this new contact.

She looked at her hand, held within both mine, and then lifting her eyes to mine, in sweet childish confidence, said: "But in my book

the prince always takes the princess to court, and I so much want to see the great world."

Innocent as was her every glance, her every word and gesture, how could she know that her words thrilled me as words had never done before? I pointed to the grave.

"My mother lies there," she said simply. "She must be happy in this valley; don't you think so? And she had seen the world. I was born here when she came from Russia. Where is Russia? Is it really so very far away?"

I had never been there, and told her so; and she looked disappointed. But the cloud rested only a moment, and seemed ill-at-home on her glad young face; and, like the child she was, she passed from one subject to another in rapid succession.

"If you do not know about Russia, at least you know about somewhere else," she said. "Come; my dinner is ready; we will eat it together, and you will tell me about the world, and I will show you my book."

More in an enchanted land than ever we crossed the stream—she with her bare feet; and by and by we came upon a wooden cot, painted green, and skillfully hidden away among the dense trees at the turn of the valley. The picturesque little dwelling reminded me a little of something I had seen in Norway. There were three small rooms opening into one another; the middle one being the living room, the other two the bedrooms of the father and daughter. The windows were like small doorways and had no other screen against wind and weather than a wooden shutter on hinges, which placed the little house in darkness when the elements were unpropitious. It struck me as odd that the builder of this pretty cot should have borne such an inconvenience. My little wood-nymph explained it by saying with an air of mystery:

"We have a lamp, you know—such a beautiful thing, bought in the great world—have you seen one? but you must have seen them, for," with a sigh, "you have come from the world. My father was afraid some one would see the light if we had windows of glass, and that I should forget to close the shutter; but who is there to see the light? When my father is away I sometimes light the lamp and put it in the valley, and the rabbits sit round and look at it. See!" she cried, "there is my good hedgehog at the door."

But I did not look at that spiny creature, for I had caught sight of a terrible pair of eyes gazing fixedly at me, and with evil intent, out of one of the door-windows. I heard at the same time a low but fierce growl.

"What an enormous dog!" I said, hesitating, as I now saw him place himself ominously in the doorway.

"Oh, Jacobin is my good friend," said the young girl, with one of her enchanting smiles; and she tried to induce him to let me enter, which, however, he showed no sign of doing, but stood his ground

determinedly. My sweet hostess thought of a device, however, which changed his whole demeanour, for he gave a sulky wag of his tail equal to the bow of a man in society who is introduced against his will.

She put one of her soft bare arms about my neck, as a sister might have done to a brother, and, reaching up, approached her red lips to my cheek and kissed me, explaining that so she did to her father ; and Jacobin would know me for a friend.

I began to feel that in spite of the unknown father, who was probably a conspirator, from his being in hiding, and from his having such a name for his dog, office-stool might see me no more. I began to be amused in thinking I should be advertised for, not by my relations, for I had none but the lawyer to whom my guardian had bound me. That gentleman would not make frantic efforts to find me, however, as he himself would come into my little property in case of my death.

Now we entered the cottage together. What a Robinson Crusoe place it was. The number of ingenious contrivances told of the difficulty of bringing anything here from the towns. Nothing had been brought that by any ingenuity could be made on the spot.

There was a fire of wood and turf, and a wood-pigeon was in process of cooking. Jacobin had brought it in, the girl explained ; and then she showed me a gun, almost sorrowfully, saying : " Sometimes I have to shoot, when there is nothing else ; but I go on to the moor, for how can I shoot my friends in the valley ? But," she added, the little cloud leaving her expressive face, " there are many good herbs in the valley, and fruits too, and berries when the year falls, and one lives well here—very well."

I added something to the meal from my own little store of " camping-out " material, and our repast was a very gay one.

When the room was put to rights, Amie—for she told me she was so called—showed me her great treasure, her one book. It was a very old and worn edition of fairy tales, printed in French. When she had turned over the pages and pointed out her favourite stories, she said with innocent mirth :

" And my prince is come too, and will marry me."

I only smiled back at her in answer. The dreamy state in which the valley itself seemed to have thrown me, and the witchery of this exquisite child of nature, lulled me into a placid quiescence in which all that followed appeared natural. Amie placed her father's room at my disposal when night came. I did not tell her I should not avail myself of it, but when she had fired me once more by her pure good-night kiss, and Jacobin had stretched his huge form across her doorway, I passed out into the cool air, and in a rapturous intoxication, unknown even to the opium eater, I paced the yielding turf the whole night through, and watched the stars glint down through the tall tree-tops. The nightingales had now filled the orchestra, and

the night was as full of melody as the day had been. And the stream rippled over the stones—and I dreamed.

Away up the valley lay my polished bicycle, with the heavy dew descending copiously upon it unheeded. It ought to have been carrying me miles away—perhaps so. Let the man who has been placed in a like position say what I ought to have done; but do not let him say he would have done it. But my experience could never come to another man. I was singled out.

In a delirium of happiness, I resolved that the foreigner's cold steel alone should separate me from my sweet princess who had graciously claimed me as her own. I little knew how soon I was to be put to the test.

II.

In the early dawn I made a careful toilet, for I had with me all requisites to suit my bohemian holiday, except a change of clothes. The night dews had saturated my tweed suit—I must trust to the fresh morning breeze to dry them. There are conditions when, the mind being paramount, the body is impervious to cold or wet. I was in such a condition on this morning, and felt neither damp nor want of sleep. I mounted to the moorland above, and saw the sunrise, and wondered if I went away, and came back, whether I should find my enchanted valley vanished. But even while I thus pondered, I saw the faint smoke curling above the trees from my wood-nymph's fire. Ah! I might have known she would rise with the birds.

I descended the valley, and found her filling her little kettle at the spring. Upon her streaming hair, which had a natural ripple of its own, there shone and glittered still the record of the cool water which must have recently known her sweet contact.

At sight of me she set down her kettle, and greeted me as "Mon prince" (this was always her name for me), with all her singular charm of innocence and grace.

In the afternoon I improvised a hammock for Amie, with my Scotch plaid hung between two trees. She swayed herself to and fro in it, delighted, her little white feet crossed, and her round arms thrown behind her head, and the birds swung on the twigs above her, no blither than she.

Lying thus, I stretched upon the green bank beside her, she told me her own history. She had little enough to tell. Happy is the nation that has no history, happier still the woman who has none. She had lost her mother when six years old. Her father had cared for her with the tenderest solicitude. It was not until she had grown tall and strong that he had left her with Jacobin for weeks together, and he always performed these evidently forced journeys with real regret. Still Amie feared nothing. . She had nothing to fear, she

said. Her education went no further than reading her fairy-tales, and her writing was but a sorry performance.

One evening, after sunset, she and I paced the valley together, whilst she begged for stories of the great world, which was to her what the moon and stars are to other children. I thought and thought, but there was so little that had not the trail of the serpent upon it. Nothing seemed fit for her pure ears. My silence caused her to find a new object of interest.

"Your hair is short," she said, "and you have no beard like my father." I told her I had shaved at the stream that morning. She then gleefully announced her intention of seeing me perform that novel operation on the morrow. Then, with a critical look at my hair, she pronounced me, "Bien comme ça!" and meditatively taking one of her own bright tresses in her hand, seemed considering an imitation.

"No," said I, answering her thought, "you must not cut it, except"—and I was cruel enough to try a worldly artifice—"except you cut a tress for me to remember you by when I go back to the world."

She instantly freed herself from my side, and standing erect and palpitating before me, seemed to wait for her grief to gather strength. Then flinging herself into my arms she sobbed upon my breast, and shed such passionate tears as I had never witnessed. "Ah," cried she, raising her pathetic, tear-stained face to gaze at me, "the prince, the true prince, never leaves his princess; then you can be no prince. But"—and her manner grew proud and determined, and love and devotion lit her too-glorious eyes—"if you go, then I shall follow you, as Jacobin would follow me."

She laid her head once more upon my breast, weeping. It was delicious to be so cared for, and I let her weep for some moments before I kissed away her tears and told her that only death should part us.

After this, several days passed—such days that even the gloom which followed was brightened by their memory.

I was lying in my hammock one night when a colder breeze sprang up, and the trees bent and swayed and moaned. I thought I heard the sound of thunder. A vivid flush of lightning nearly blinded me. I rose up in my hammock and listened. A terrible peal rang through the wood. Another and another peal, and the birds began to twitter, and the echoes repeated themselves in the hills; and now there was a crashing sound of heavy rain upon the leaves. Down it came in torrents, and the lightning played almost continuously and the thunder kept up an incessant roar. I have never in my life seen such a storm. The wind tore down the valley, and the trees on which my hammock hung bent nearly to the ground. My bed was now as watery as the lark's proverbially is. I descended the valley, the little stream was flowing noisily, and the driving wind in this narrow gulley flung me hither and thither like a reed. I made my

way with difficulty towards the cottage. Jacobin was howling dismally. Amie was standing at the open door, the wind and rain beating mercilessly upon her. She was starting to come to me, she said, to beg me to take shelter. I entered, drenched to the skin, and breathless from the heavy gusts of wind. Even as I entered, the wind tore up the valley more furiously than ever, and wrenching one of the shutters from its catch, banged it backwards and forwards on its hinges till it broke away, and the storm burst relentlessly into the little sitting-room. It was for that reason that we passed into Amie's little chamber. Her lamp was lit, and we sat hand in hand, silent, as the hurricane raged. The uproar caused by the raging wind and furious rain and clashing torrent made it almost impossible to hear each other speak. It also covered the entrance of a stranger.

There, without warning, framed in the doorway stood a man of about fifty; his eyes resembled the dog's, but they were even more terrible. He wore a beard, and his mouth was hidden by a heavy moustache. From the broad-brimmed hat he wore, the water streamed upon his shoulders, and his long coat had been torn apart in the storm.

His eyes and mine were fixed on one another; nevertheless I saw his hand, so boney and hairy, clutching at the handle of something that projected from his pocket. Could it be steel? It was.

With a cool precision he balanced that terrible weapon and steadily advanced upon me. He sought no explanation. He gave none. The storm raged even more fiercely; the cottage shook violently. The lamp upon the table shuddered and fell. The flames began to rise. The beloved book was the first to catch fire. Nobody spoke, or the storm rendered the voices inaudible. Amie clung to me with a grip her frail form seemed incapable of. The dog howled ominously. There was a loud crash close upon us, and the rain and wind poured into the room. The shutter had gone like its fellow. All was darkness but for the liquid flame falling from the wooden table to the ground.

I took a sudden resolution. Amie was clinging to my neck. Madly I leaped through the aperture the shutter had left, carrying her with me. I fled through the storm like part of itself, my lovely burden flung across my shoulder. As I fled, glancing behind, I beheld in the lightning's gleam my pursuer. I rushed through the stream that was now wild and turbid, and sped upward between the trees. The ground flew beneath my feet. I gained the moorland above. Which direction should I now take? All were equally open to the gaze of my pursuer. Could I, burdened as I was, hope to outstrip him? Was I using up the strength which would presently be needed? I had not to decide the question. A perfect hurricane of wind swerved round, from what direction I could not tell, but it uprooted trees, and they fell crashing down the valley. It threw me violently to the ground. "Oh, my Amie, we are lost," I cried. She spoke no

word. On came the foreigner. I tried to rise, but found it impossible; my ankle was badly sprained. The next flash of lightning revealed my enemy advancing upon me. It also revealed us to him.

Amie flung herself across my body. Love can speak without words. Her act said "I will die for you."

"Not that!" I cried, and I put her from me. Her father—for I could not doubt it was he—now stood above us.

He commanded me in French to rise to my feet. I expressed my inability, and cried wrathfully: "Would you kill me like a dog?"

"Ah my fine gentleman," said he, "it is now that you find your tongue," and I heard his voice between the thunder-claps, and saw his awful face in the lightning flashes.

"Parbleu, but you did not count the cost! You tracked my dove; but tell me, who shall track you? who shall seek you here."

"Your child," said I, with all the energy of desperation, "is what I found her: the sweetest, purest thing the sun shines on."

"Or the storm beats on," added he, ironically. "Then the purest thing the sun shines on may enter paradise to-night."

The fresh voice of my darling here made music in the tumult.

"It is well, mon prince bien-aimé, we are not to be separated."

The cold steel descended. I had but just flung Amie from me again, when that noble dog, who knew how dear I was to his mistress, covered me with his body, and received the wound intended for me, licking my face.

It was intensely dark, and so near had I come to death, I had lost the power of speech.

Again that terrible knife descended. This time it passed through my arm. I felt no pain, I only knew it, and swooned.

I must have been left for dead; for the next thing I knew was that the sun was pouring down its rays upon the drenched earth, stained red with my blood, and that noble animal, with a gash above his shoulder, had torn away my sleeve from the wound and was licking it.

Towards evening I crawled into the valley, and put my lips to the water like the dog, who had dragged himself painfully at my side. I bathed his wound, and that night he and I lay on the ruins of the little cottage; for all the interior was reduced to ashes. I lost all count of time, but the sun rose and set again, and I tottered to my feet. Jacobin tried to follow me, but rolled over on his side. Once more I fetched water from the stream in my hat, which had remained on my head from its close-fitting shape. But the poor animal was past all help. He licked my hand, and died.

I reverently buried him, using the tools of my would-be murderer. Then I said farewell to the enchanted valley, to devote each hour of freedom from work to a search for my love—my love whose very name was unknown to me.

Her father would be kind to her, that was some comfort. Well I knew that his threat to her was empty.

III.

PURSUING my sad and apparently hopeless search for my princess, when recurring holidays freed me for a time from the practice of the law, I found myself in Paris, a few years later, at Easter. Hope still dwelt in me, for that Amie lived I felt convinced ; and surely in such a love as ours there must be a magnetism which sooner or later would draw our divided lives together.

At that time all Paris was talking of "Théodora," and one evening, finding myself near the Porte St. Martin Theatre, I entered, taking such a seat as remained at that hour. I paid but little attention to the play, but, closing my eyes, listened to the soft music of Sarah Bernhardt's voice. Those gentle tones recalled another voice to me.

It was after the scene where Marcellus chose death rather than betray his fellow-conspirators, that a young Frenchman near me remarked to his companion :

"But they are droll people, these conspirators—they hate and are hated, they love and are loved. Ma foi ! one would do well to be a conspirator, to be wept for by such eyes as those of sweet Belinski."

"Does she still go to her father's grave ?" asked the other.

I began to listen intently.

"Sans doute—it is every day you will see her with her bonne at Père la Chaise."

"When she marries, all that will cease."

"Marries, did you say ? You do not know, then, that she has refused half Paris ?"

"Is it a prince, then, that Mademoiselle awaits ?"

This sarcastically.

"Ah, yes !" I said within myself ; "and the prince has come with the kiss that is to awaken the sweet princess !" My pulses beat wildly. Then came a shadow of fear. This might not be Amie.

The Emperor Justinian and Théodora were now in the Royal 'loge,' and the awful scene, though different, recalled that night when she and I had been torn asunder—but I, unlike Andréas, lived ; then why not Amie also ?

Need I say that next morning I was early at Père la Chaise. I stood on the rising ground near the tomb of Béranger, where I could take a survey of the whole. How long the time seemed ! Yet before twelve I saw a girl of about twenty, dressed in black, carrying fresh spring flowers in her hands, and beside her was a bonne who seemed to be trying to cheer her.

That first day when I had seen her I was standing by her mother's grave. I was hat in hand beside her father's as she approached it now, with eyes cast down. Oh, how glorious is beauty when pathos shadows it ! How did I note each change in the dear features ? She

placed her flowers upon the grave, and then I saw the bright tears slowly travel down the fair cheeks.

"Ah, do not cry, mon enfant ! Some day, when you have a husband and children, you will be happy," said the bonne, encouragingly.

"My husband is in another land," she said, still looking down.

Oh, that voice ! how it stirred my very soul. I moved towards her and held out my hands.

"Oh, my princess," I cried passionately, "not in another land, but here, here to claim you."

With a cry she threw herself upon my breast, fainting.

Since then, Amie and I have together visited the enchanted valley. There were still the ruins of the Châlet. There was the grave with the withered wreath upon it, and the grass had thrown a green coverlet over poor Jacobin. Fragments of my hammock still fluttered on the trees. But the past, with its dark horror, was gone ; and only the present, the present full of bliss, remained.

JEANIE GWINNE BETTANY.



BY AND BY.

WAYWARD soul, ah, wherefore grieving ?

Look on high ;

Wintry clouds are surely leaving ;

Soon beneath a sunny sky

Nature shall awake to gladness,

Birds resume their merry madness,

There will be no room for sadness

By and by.

See you not, with cheerful presage,

Spring is nigh—

• Read you not her loving message,

In the daisy's golden eye ?

Though the words be all unspoken

Take we now the gracious token,

Grief's dominion shall be broken

By and by.

Ah, the bravest heart would often

Faint and die,

Were it not that hope may soften

Disappointment's bitter cry.

For the longest life of sorrow,

If one mighty Aid we borrow,

Yet shall have a happy morrow

By and by.

SYDNEY GREY.

THE MISSING RUBIES.

BY SARAH DOUDNEY.

CHAPTER V.

BEATRICE WARD.

HIGH up in a top bed-room in the Miltons' house, Beatrice Ward was rising and dressing, eager to begin her first day of London life.

Her waking thoughts were of the old cottage in the country, shut up and empty now, and of the apple-blossoms drifting over the grassy garden-walks, and the swallows darting hither and thither in the sunshine. Tears were running down her cheeks, as this picture of the old home rose vividly before her eyes ; but she controlled herself, and steadily resolved to carry a cheerful face downstairs to the kind woman who had given her a home. And then came second thoughts ; the tears were dried ; the vision of the little cottage faded, and she murmured half aloud :

"I wonder whether I shall see him to-day ?"

Mrs. Milton was a lady by birth and education, and she had trained Beatrice in her own simple and somewhat old-fashioned way. From childhood to girlhood she had attended her in her daily walks ; taking care that her frocks were properly lengthened ; and told her what was right and what was wrong for young girls to do. And it must be confessed that when her former pupil was handed out of the cab by a strange young man, the worthy woman had felt a little thrill of surprise and dismay. It might not be really improper, but it looked so ; and she took the first opportunity of questioning Beatrice about her travelling-companion. Wifehood had made very few changes in Mrs. Milton. Once a governess, she was always a governess, prepared with her neat little lectures on correct behaviour, and as ready as ever to administer mild rebukes to her charge.

Beatrice had given a fairly satisfactory account of her acquaintance with Godwin Earle, but she could not bring herself to tell the whole story of that first meeting on the railway line. She was not used to concealments, and her tale was, perhaps, a little awkwardly told. In fact, if she had been severely cross-examined later on, it is doubtful whether she could have clearly repeated the explanation which had been extracted from her by Mrs. Milton. She felt that it was quite right of her old governess to ask questions under the circumstances, and she had tried to answer them without having recourse to any fibs. And the long and short of it all was, that Mrs. Milton had received a vague impression that Beatrice had been seized with

sudden faintness as she was crossing the Silverdean fields ; that she had been found, half insensible, by Mr. Earle ; that he had helped her to reach the railway station, and had then taken care of her on the journey.

All through the night the kind-hearted woman had worried herself about the girl's state of health, and had made up her mind to call in a doctor at once if there was the slightest return of that terrible faintness. It was a great relief to see Beatrice coming downstairs in her neat black gown, with a fresh, morning face, and eyes that showed only the very faintest traces of tears.

"I hope you have slept well, my dear ?" said Mrs. Milton, anxiously. "Yes ; I see you look rested. I always detect the traces of wakeful nights at a glance. Now come and have breakfast without a moment's delay. I have been thinking a great deal about that fainting-fit of yours, and I believe I have found out the cause."

"Oh, it wasn't at all a bad fainting-fit," replied Beatrice, with a slight colour rising to her cheeks. "And indeed it didn't last long."

"You don't know how long it lasted—how could you know, when that young man discovered you lying on the grass in a state of insensibility ? It makes me shudder when I picture the scene, Beatrice !"

"Then please don't picture it, dear !"

"Nonsense," said Mrs. Milton, loading her pupil's plate with good things. "It is my duty to try and realise any adventure in which you are concerned. And I must caution you, Beatrice, against the foolish practice of going out early in the morning without a substantial breakfast. You fainted because you had not taken enough nourishment to sustain your frame. It is well for you that Providence interfered on your behalf, or the consequences of your folly might have been very serious."

"I did feel rather weak and spent when we arrived at the railway-station," admitted Beatrice, busy with ham and eggs. "Mr. Earle got a cup of tea for me at a cottage."

"Very kind and sensible of him. But, my child, you must not go about the world accepting cups of tea from young men. I am not pleased, by any means, at this unconventional beginning of an acquaintance."

"But, Harriet, I couldn't help it." Miss Ward always addressed her ex-governess by her Christian name. "And he is a thorough gentleman ; you could see that, I'm sure."

"He *looks* a thorough gentleman. But, Beatrice, child, you have yet to learn how much a man may have lost before he loses external refinement. It is the last thing that leaves him."

"If you are going to talk in this depressing strain, Harriet, you will utterly spoil my breakfast," said the girl in an aggrieved tone. "Why have we to come to the conclusion that Mr. Earle has nothing but his external refinement to recommend him ? Why is it necessary always to believe the worst of people at once ?"

"Not necessary to believe the worst, only to be prepared for the worst, Beatrice."

"I don't see much difference between the two things. If you are prepared for anything, of course you are expecting it. But that's just your way, Harriet; when we were going for a long walk you always armed yourself with an umbrella, and distrusted the clearest of skies."

"It was true wisdom, my dear. Even if I did not use the umbrella, it was a comfort to know that it was ready for use."

"It wasn't a comfort, it was a nuisance. A precaution is always a nuisance, I believe. And if we have to go through life suspecting a swindler in every new acquaintance, I, for one, shall be very glad when the time comes for me to seek a better sphere."

"Beatrice, dear, for shame! A young girl must be contented with life as it is, and take it patiently."

"I can't be contented with the kind of life that you describe," declared the girl, with a little shake of her sunny head.

"Do you know, my dear Harriet, I sympathise with Beatrice!" The remark came from Mr. Milton, who had finished his breakfast, and was just ready to be off to the city. "I confess I don't like to see young people over-cautious, although you are right—as you always are—in putting them upon their guard. Now about this young man who travelled with her; a sort of instinct tells me that he is perfectly to be trusted. I can't account for this instinct in the least; and yet it would be impossible for anyone to reason it away."

"What a dear man Mr. Milton is," thought Beatrice, and her blue eyes flashed him a swift glance of gratitude. He carefully buttoned his gloves, kissed his wife, and took his departure.

"My husband is the most confiding creature in the world," said Mrs. Milton, with a sigh. "He trusts everybody in the sweetest childlike way, and gets abominably imposed upon."

"Harriet, I am sure he is perfectly delightful!"

"My dear, he is simply an angel." Mrs. Milton spoke in a solemn tone. "But what he would do without me, heaven only knows! Let me see; I believe I never told you how we came to live in Wimpole Street. Soon after we were married, my husband's uncle died and left him the lease of this house and all the furniture. The lease has still twenty years to run, and it seemed to me that we had better come here and let part of the house, which is infinitely too large for us, than stop in our cottage at Shepherd's Bush. I delight in managing a large house, and I always hated a small one. Richard opposed the plan at first, but he is quite contented now."

"And the plan has answered," said Beatrice. "I am not surprised at your success. My grandfather always declared that you had a genius for managing an establishment. But I am glad you keep this charming room for yourselves."

The Miltons' sitting-room was on the dining-room floor, at the back

of the house. A French window opened upon a paved yard, which Harriet's taste and skill had converted into a sort of flower-garden. Just now it was looking its best with fresh greenery and a bright show of geraniums ; and there was a gay flower-stand inside the room. The scarlet and gold of the blossoms toned well with the rich brown of the walls and the soft red and russet hues of the couch and carpet. Everything was comfortable ; everything was refined. There were goodly rows of books ranged on the shelves, and a pretty piano occupied one corner.

" You must see the whole house by-and-bye," said Mrs. Milton, pleased with her approval. " But at present the rooms are quite full ; the ladies in the drawing-room will stay to the end of the season, and we have a permanent lodger on the second floor. By the way, Beatrice, you are sure to be interested in Mr. Vordenberg ; he looks just like some one in a tragedy or a poem."

" And he is the second floor lodger ? "

" Yes ; he was one of the first who came to us. One can't decide on his age, but I don't think he can be old, although his hair is perfectly white. He has a beautiful, melancholy face, always very pale, with chiselled features and fine dark eyes ; and he plays and sings divinely."

" What a delightful person to have in the house ! Do you get at all friendly with him ? "

" Not exactly friendly. It would not be wise, for many reasons, to be too intimate with our lodgers. Besides, there is something inpenetrably reserved about Mr. Vordenberg ; he is always courteous and gentle, but you can never get very near to him."

" Vordenberg is rather a romantic name. It isn't English."

" I believe he is an Austrian. But I myself have heard him talk, apparently with equal fluency, in English, French, German and Italian. Sometimes he has foreign visitors ; they are always men, and rather shabby-looking men, too."

" Did you know anything of him before he came here ? " Beatrice inquired.

" My dear, we always learn something of people before we receive them. It was our doctor who recommended Mr. Vordenberg to come to us. He is the most pleasant of lodgers, regular in all his habits and simple in all his tastes ; but we know no more about him now than we knew when he first arrived. Sometimes, in the evening, when I pass his door, I hear him singing some plaintive air that brings tears into my eyes, and I feel persuaded that he is a man of many sorrows. But what those sorrows are, I cannot even guess."

" And the other lodgers," said Beatrice ; " are they interesting, too ? "

" Not in the least. They are ordinary women, well connected, and with some money to spend, who have come up to town to go

through the season in the orthodox way. In the dining-room there is a widow and her young daughter ; in the drawing-room there are two sisters, one married and one single ; they are just the kind of people who may be met anywhere."

Beatrice had finished her breakfast, and was feeling all the irrepressible buoyancy of health and youth. The excitement and fatigue of yesterday had passed away ; even the sorrow of her loss seemed to be fading softly into the far past ; and yet she knew that often in some quiet hour the old country home would rise before her eyes again. But the whole world seemed new to-day ; the sunshine was waiting for her out of doors ; the shops were splendid with early summer fashions, and the streets gay with well-dressed people. She would not have been the natural, healthy girl that she was if she had not wanted instantly to go out and enjoy herself.

"Dear Harriet," she said, suddenly kissing her old governess : "I hope you won't think me very hard and unfeeling because I'm in good spirits this morning !"

"Why should I think such things of you, child?" Mrs. Milton dearly loved her pupil, and she rather liked Beatrice to call her "Harriet ;" it made her feel young.

"Well, because some people would blame me, I suppose, for taking an interest in the life that is going on around me. They would say that I ought not to forget why I am wearing this," touching her black gown. "And indeed I don't forget ; I never shall cease to remember *him*. But I am young, Harriet, and I had rather a dreary time at Silverdean after you left us."

Her lips, full and soft, were quivering like the lips of a sorrowful child ; and there was in fact a good deal of the child left in Beatrice Ward. A far harder woman than Mrs. Milton would have been moved at the sight of that wistful face.

"My dear," she said, taking Beatrice's hand between her own, "it is the greatest relief to me to find that your spirit is not crushed by grief and by the lonely life that you have led. It was not the right life for a girl to live ; it might have made you a gloomy and morbid woman. You don't know how often I have longed to take you away from that melancholy old cottage and bring you here into the heart of the world. It is a wicked world, my dear, as the parsons always tell us ; but I think the people who live out of it are generally as bad or rather worse than those who live in it."

"Why, Harriet!" Beatrice was laughing, although tears were ready to fall. "I didn't expect to hear such remarks from you. I thought you would be prosing every day about rustic delights and rural innocence, and weeping over the iniquities of life in town."

"There is enough to weep over. But as to rustic delights, Beatrice—can I ever forget rustic selfishness and rural narrowness of mind, to say nothing of the bumptiousness which makes country folk so difficult to deal with? However, we won't waste a lovely morning

in this kind of talk. I have arranged all my household matters, and if you are willing, we will start at once for the Royal Academy."

"Oh, I'm so glad we are to go there!" Beatrice gave a sigh of infinite satisfaction, and then turned to leave the room and ran lightly upstairs. A jaded young lady, chancing to open her door, looked rather enviously at the fresh face as it flitted past, and thought that the girl in black must certainly be new to the fashionable world.

Meanwhile, the girl in black had speedily gained her own room, and was arranging her simple dress, putting on her little bonnet and smoothing the wavy gold of her hair with that natural contentment which comes to a pretty girl at a looking-glass. The bonnet was new, and she was wearing it for the first time. It had been chosen by Mrs. Milton, and had waited in the wardrobe for her arrival. Beatrice fastened the black bow under her dimpled chin, and told herself that she decidedly approved of Harriet's choice. Truly, there is nothing like black for setting off a cream-tinted skin and bright hair; and Miss Ward went downstairs again with the happy consciousness of looking her very best.

"You have improved, Beatrice," said Mrs. Milton, with grave decision. "Yes, you have improved very much. As a child you were a little sallow, but I never despaired of you, even at your worst. Besides, I know that pink-and-white complexions are seldom to be depended upon, and I always hoped that you would take the ivory tinge. Really, I am very much pleased with you."

They went out together into the sunlight, and before they had gone many yards, Beatrice had forgotten her new bonnet, and even her improved complexion, and was wondering whether Mr. Earle might chance to stroll into Burlington House. She listened absently to her companion's talk, and saw Godwin in every well-dressed man who crossed her path. How had he begun this bright new day? Would the old despair seize him once more in its cruel grasp? She felt that her heart could never be quite at rest until she had met him again, face to face, and assured herself that he was reconciled to the common lot of humanity.

But when she found herself among the pictures, her eyes and mind were so fully occupied that she ceased to watch for Godwin Earle. With all her heart, and in her own simple fashion, she thoroughly enjoyed the show, and gazed her fill, regardless of the sneers of amateur critics: often just enough, perhaps, but ill-timed and not too well expressed. Mrs. Milton was a capital guide, pointing out the most noteworthy works unobtrusively, and lingering as long as her pupil pleased over anything that struck her fancy. The rooms were very full, but the hour was early still, and the great rush and crush would come later on.

Beatrice had paused, spell-bound, before a certain picture, hung on the line; and her companion watched her face as she stood and looked, her soul in her deep-blue eyes, a slight colour tinging her

cheeks. The artist had chosen no new subject—there was a leaden sky, a waste of snow, and a band of Polish exiles on their way to Siberia—but he had told the bitter story well. And surely, in all the world's great chronicle of crimes there is no darker page than the tale of Russia's dealings with Poland. It was a page that Beatrice, in her lonely country home, had studied intently, with all the passionate indignation of a warm-hearted woman. And here was a scene, which her fancy had often pictured, presented at last to her bodily sight.

Turning round suddenly to speak to Mrs. Milton, she found that a stranger had taken her friend's place and was standing close by her side. A tall, thin man, with an indescribable stateliness of look and bearing, was gazing earnestly at the picture, taking in every detail as if he were printing the whole upon his memory, and yet never moving a muscle of his grand, calm face. It was a face that might itself have served admirably for a painter's study : so clearly and finely moulded, so marble-white, so proud in its melancholy beauty. The silvery hair formed a striking contrast to the dark eyes which still shone with the fire of youth ; the eyebrows were dark too, and the full beard was only slightly grey. Beatrice, fascinated, and almost startled, could not help looking at him, and noting that absorbed gaze of his. At that moment a hand touched her lightly on the arm.

"Come, my dear," said Mrs. Milton's voice on the other side of her. She followed her chaperon at once, and in another second or two they had moved away from the spot. Not until several groups were between them and the bearded man, did Mrs. Milton venture to speak without restraint, and even then she cast a timid glance behind her.

"Oh, Beatrice," she began, "how you were staring at Mr. Vordenberg ! I don't think he noticed you, and I am sure I hope not. What could have possessed you, child ?"

"Was that Mr. Vordenberg ? It was very wrong of me to stare at him, Harriet," replied Beatrice, quite penitently. "But I could not help it ; his face fascinated me ; he is so sad and splendid."

"Sad and splendid ! Yes ; those two words describe him exactly. But I do hope, Beatrice, you will get used to the sadness and splendour, and not look at him when you meet him on the stairs. I daresay you will often see him ; his rooms are under yours, you know."

"I'll shut my eyes when I hear him coming. I'll do anything rather than misbehave myself ; and yet, Harriet, I must get another view of him somehow. I never saw anybody look so romantic in all my life."

"Well, you haven't seen much in all your life. However, he is remarkable, I admit. But Richard and I are quite sure that he does not want to attract notice ; it is evident that he likes to lead the quietest of lives."

"He is a man with a history ; I am certain of it," said Beatrice.

"I am not certain of it," Mrs. Milton rejoined. "I have seen expressive faces allied to empty heads, and impassive faces masking hot hearts. Mr. Vordenberg may have led only a commonplace life after all."

Beatrice shook her head.

"No, Harriet, you won't persuade me that there's anything commonplace about him. But in future I will not betray my interest in this wonderful lodger of yours so openly. Now let us forget him, if we can, and look at some more pictures."

It was not, however, very easy to forget Mr. Vordenberg; and just as they were preparing to leave the exhibition, Beatrice expressed a wish to take another glance at the Polish exiles. They stepped back into the room where this picture was hung; and there, still standing before it in rapt contemplation, was the man with the long beard and silver hair.

"He must mean to buy it," said Mrs. Milton, when they were fairly outside Burlington House; "and I hope he will not, for it is a melancholy thing to hang on one's wall. But I don't think he is rich, and that picture would cost a large sum."

When Beatrice was alone in her own room, the face of Vordenberg was still before her eyes, sad and impenetrably calm; and to a bright girl, living in her own youthful world, there was something wonderful in that deep tranquillity. She tried to fancy all that he had seen and done before that look of peace had fixed itself on his features. What deserts had he crossed, what mountains had he climbed, to gain the resting-place that he had won at last?

She had tasted sorrow: her father's death in India had suddenly stripped her young life of all its gay hopes and pretty fancies. The quiet years with the old grandfather in the cottage had made her acquainted with other forms of grief; she had sympathised with her neighbours and helped them in their needs; but all those griefs and needs had been of a very simple and common kind. Vordenberg's suffering had lifted him up to the heights that she had never climbed, and, perhaps, never could climb.

The sight of that face of his had given her a hint of what a life may be if it is tried by such cleansing fires as few of us pass through. He must, she thought, have had all selfishness and frivolity burned out of him, and there was nothing left now but that grand, ineffable peace.

"But if the prize is great it has to be won by a terrible ordeal," thought Beatrice, with a thrill of fear. "I hope it will not be my lot to bear any of those great troubles; I have no longing for the martyr's crown. It seems very mean of me to think these thoughts, but I am only a commonplace young woman, and all I want is a little common happiness."

She did not realise, poor child, that even this same common happiness is not such an easy thing to get as it seems to be. Our

everyday joy of loving and being beloved is set about so thickly with thorns, that the hand which would gather it can hardly escape a wound.

But Beatrice was not right in calling herself a commonplace young woman. She had stronger lights and deeper shades in her character than commonplace people ever have. When she looked at a fine picture, or read a noble poem, her face would be lit up with spiritual beauty; certain strains of music interpreted the language of her heart; certain aspects of earth and sky would send her thoughts travelling into a glorious dreamland.

As yet, however, the world was a very new world to her, and only her right instinct guided her to the true. By-and-bye the false would present itself in its most attractive guise, but it had not reached her yet. She looked at everyone with confiding eyes that had never seen behind a fair mask, nor caught a glimpse of a cloven foot under a velvet slipper. All the bitter knowledge of life was still to come.

After a little while she left off thinking of Vordenberg and began to recall the pictures that had pleased her best. She hoped Harriet would take her to see them a second time; or, it would be better still, if Mr. Earle would be her companion. But this idea was so wild that her cheeks grew hot when it came into her head, and she tried to drive it away.

Beatrice spent a part of the afternoon in unpacking her belongings and arranging them in the wardrobe and drawers. Her room was quite large enough to hold everything that she possessed, and there was space for a small table and a comfortable arm-chair. That chair, soft and pillowy, invited her to rest; the afternoon sun was shining in upon the walls, filling the whole chamber with golden light, and enfolding her in a dreamy brightness that suggested repose. Her mind was still full of the pictures, and her eyes were tired with sightseeing; but it was a pleasant sort of weariness that was creeping over her fast. Sleep came on her unawares; her head sank gently back upon the chair, and she drifted away, then and there, into a very tranquil dreamland.

She woke gently, without any startling return of consciousness; and yet it seemed as if the music heard in dreams had followed her into the everyday world. The door was open, and someone in the rooms below was singing and playing on the piano; singing an unknown air, with a strange, subdued passion that thrilled her, and almost moved her to tears. Parting, pain unutterable, and hope that rose free and triumphant from the crushing weight of a mighty sorrow—all this, and more, was expressed in that wonderful song.

Beatrice rose, her breast heaving, her cheeks flushed, and went out on the landing to listen. Then someone came running quickly upstairs; the music suddenly stopped; a door closed; and she was turning back, disappointed, to her room, when Mrs. Milton's voice called her.

(*To be continued.*)

ON THE SHORE.

Beyond those sunset bars of gold,
 Which light the waves of the purple sea,
 Near the crystal river, the pearly gate,
 know you are watching and waiting for me.

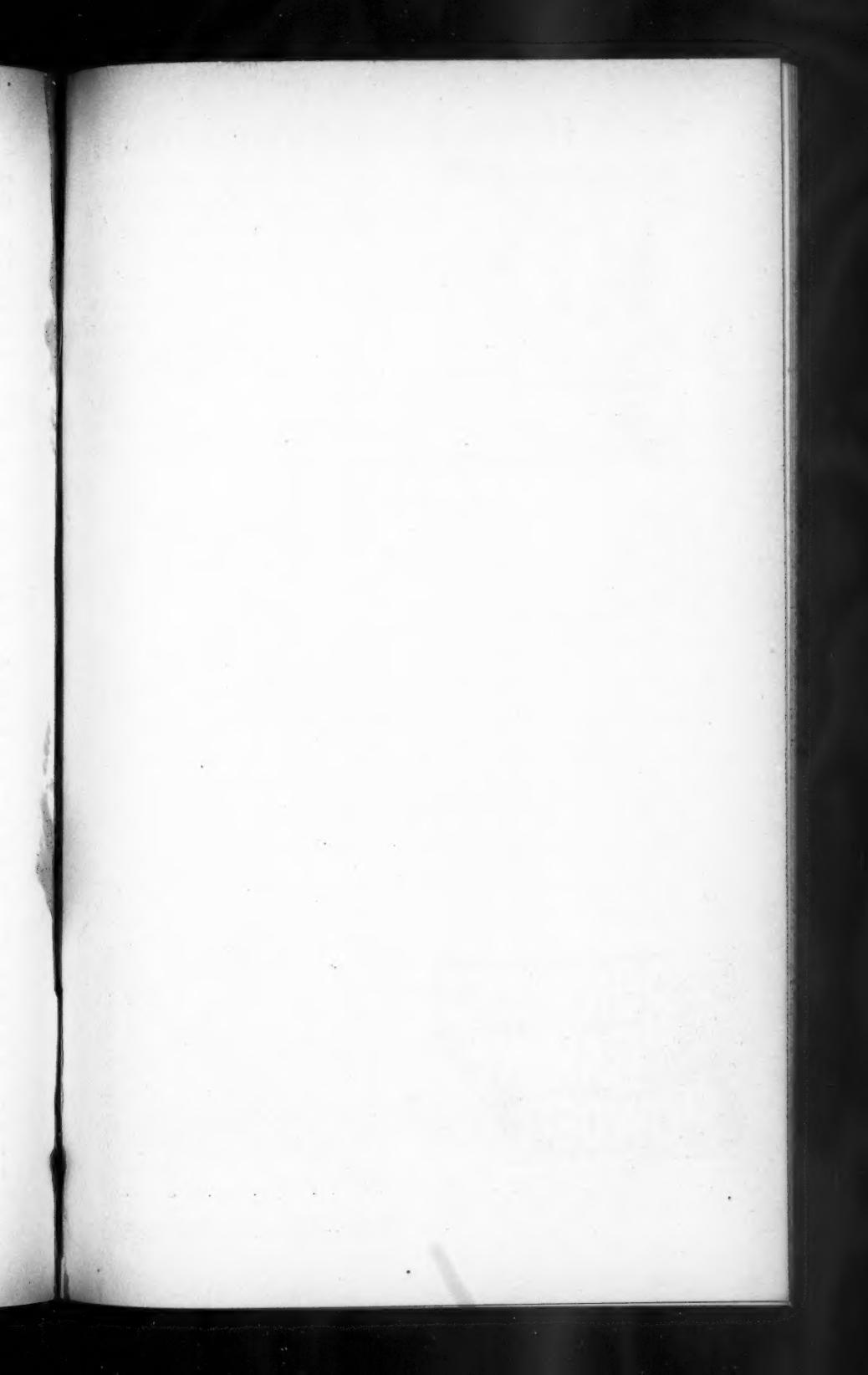
Not weary, not fearful, for Time with you
 Is never measured by lingering years,
 And the golden points on the dial's face
 Are numbered by smiles, and not by tears.

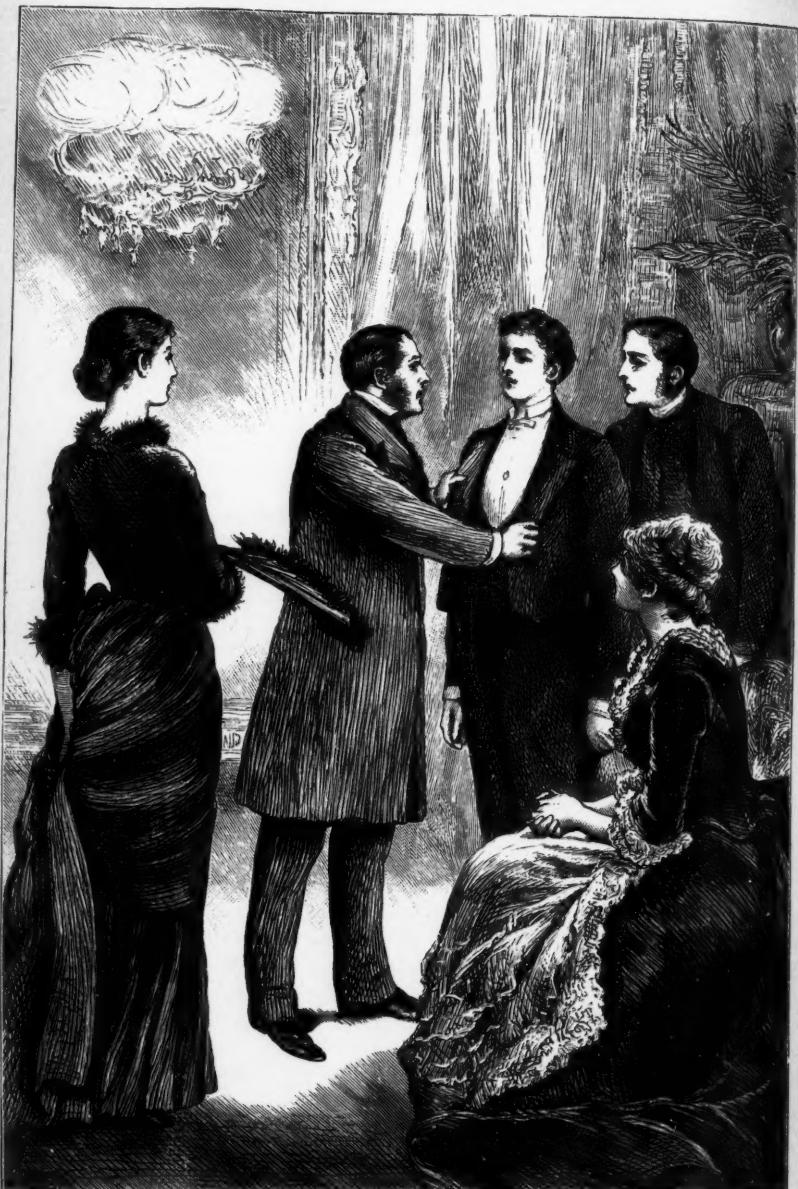
To-night as I walk on the lonely shore,
 And list to the mournful surge's beat,
 I think of the music that falls on your ear,
 Of the beautiful blossoms that lie at your feet.

And 'tis joy to know that no grief of mine
 Can darken a brow so bright and fair ;
 Yet I sometimes fancy my spirit can feel
 A gleam from the glorious radiance there.

A boat will lie shortly on yonder wave,
 The Boatman be drawing towards the shore :
 His call of warning I soon shall hear,
 And the soft, lowplash of His ready oar.

He will bear me safely, His arm is strong,
 Till the walls of the golden gate I see ;
 And when I reach it your task is done,
 There is no more watching and waiting for me.





M. ELLEN STAPLES.

R. TAYLOR.

"IT IS A WONDERFUL LIKENESS, IS IT NOT, LADY GRACE?" WENT ON THE SURGEON.